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IAN BAUCOM WANTS MIDDLEBURY TO BE THE BEST LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE IN THE WORLD

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN, MANDY BERGHELA & COLE CHAUDHARI
Editor in Chief, Managing Editor & Senior News Editor

Since Ian Baucom began his role as Middlebury College's 18th president in July, he's mapped out a regular walking route. Starting at his office in Old Chapel, he winds past Old and New Battell, through BiHall, out to the Knoll, back up College Street, around Proctor and down to Axinn. Sometimes he walks with a faculty or staff member, engaged in conversation. Other times he's alone, thinking. He is still searching for a favorite campus tree, he said. Like any other first year, Baucom has time.

For the postcolonial and climate change studies scholar and former provost at the University of Virginia (UVA), his first semester at the college's helm has come with a whirlwind of new experiences and challenges to confront.

In August, he decided to close the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS), a major step towards balancing the college's large budget

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COURTESY PHOTO/ BRETT SIMISON

On the college president's to-do list is leading a Strategic Planning Initative and a 24-hour Ross challenge.

Davis Library to close Research Desk, citing decline in student use and departmental restructure

By MET LY
Staff Writer

Beginning next semester, the Research Desk at the Davis Family Library will be terminated as part of a broader restructuring of the Library's Research, Instruction and Data Services (RI&D) department to adapt to student needs and budget constraints. The RI&D team will instead focus on individual consultation appointments to support student research.

According to Alyssa Wright, Director of RI&D, the research desk is rarely approached during its open hours.

"[The numbers] boil down to less than one question per hour for the hours that were staffed," Wright wrote in a statement, citing RI&D data. Of those questions, only a small portion were research-related. "It's not an efficient use of resources."

In recent years, the library has struggled to keep the research desk sufficiently staffed.

"[The Research Desk's] position was always designed to be temporary," Write wrote. "Many academic libraries closed their desks or consolidated service desks in the last 10 years due to a decline in traffic."

RI&D will focus on serving students through individual scheduled research consults, class-based research help clinics and librarian office hours at spaces like the Quantitative Center. The "Q-Center" opened to provide STEM tutoring assistance as the Armstrong Science Library closed last winter.

Wright noted that the library's outreach capacity has diminished in recent years due to vacancies. The team is currently strained by high needs from departments like Economics and Political Science, according to RI&D data. They plan to hire a new research librarian specializing in the Humanities and Social Sciences in the next semester, which will ideally allow RI&D to rebuild connections with academic departments and expand its visibility among students.

The new hiring comes as the department reels with the

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Audrey MacLean '27 wins NCAA DIII cross country championship

COURTESY PHOTO/ GEORGE MADISON

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Four of six Honor Code amendments pass with student and faculty votes

By RACHELLE TALBERT
News Editor

For the past two years, the Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) has been reviewing Middlebury's Honor Code, bringing students, faculty and staff into the process. Dean of Students Joe Russell announced the results of this review process in November.

One change includes adjusting the default punishment of suspension to a range of sanctions based on the severity of the honor code violation. This amendment was ratified by a student vote conducted last fall, and was then confirmed by a faculty vote.

Other changes that passed required only faculty approval. Those adjustments are explicitly incorporating generative artificial intelligence (AI) into the definition of plagiarism, requiring prior approval for students to reuse work when repeating a course and updating basic language for inclusivity and accuracy.

Out of the three changes that the AIC proposed to be voted on by both students and faculty, only one, adding a range of sanctions, received sufficient votes from both groups.

Students voted against allowing faculty to proctor

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PALANA SEES SHARP DROP IN MEMBER-RESIDENTS, RISKS LOSING STATUS AS SOCIAL HOUSE

QUINLAN WANG / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The rate of students living in the PALANA house who are also PALANA members has fallen from 96% in the 2021-2022 academic year to just 13% this fall.

By HUGO ZHANG
News Editor

Earlier this fall, leaders of PALANA, Middlebury's Pan-African, Latinx, Asian, and Native American multicultural student organization, said they were informed by the Student Activities Office (SAO) and Residential Life (ResLife) that the group is at risk of losing its social house, also known as Palmer House, on 260 Ridgeline Road. SAO and ResLife expressed concerns over the occupancy rate of the house by PALANA members, which has fallen in recent years, according to PALANA Co-President Fany Yepiz Medina '26.

Executive Director for Student Engagement Valerie Nettleton said that PALANA is thriving as a student organization, but underperforming as a social house. ResLife expects that rooms in social houses be filled primarily by members of its corresponding student organization so that each house can offer a cohesive living experience, Associate Dean for Student Life AJ Place confirmed.

"The concern is a progressive drop in the residency of [PALANA's] members over the past few years," Nettleson said. "Currently out of 30 beds in that house, four are occupied by PALANA members."

Before each term, student organizations submit rosters that indicate how many of their members will live in their social house. ResLife then releases any unfilled beds into the regular housing lottery for non-members.

Roster data provided by Place show that PALANA's member-occupancy rate has declined sharply over the past five years. In the 2021-22 academic year, 96% of beds in the house were filled by PALANA members. By the 2023-2024 academic year, that figure had dropped to 16% and fell again to 13% for the current 2025-26 academic year.

The average member-occupancy rate for social houses other than PALANA has varied each year, but is

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IAN BAUCOM WANTS MIDDLEBURY TO BE THE BEST LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE IN THE WORLD

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deficit. His inauguration on Nov. 2 came the same week he was tasked with leading a community mourning the suicide of Lia Smith '26. Baucom was selected for the presidency in January, the same month Donald Trump returned to the White House. Trump has since sought to dismantle critical aspects of higher education nationwide.

While Baucom could not have predicted the full magnitude of this shift while he was interviewing for the job, a crystal ball would have only affirmed his decision.

"I wouldn't want to be a college president any other time, because it's so clear that what we do matters," Baucom said in an interview with The Campus.

In October, Baucom signed a statement along with several other college presidents rejecting the Trump administration's "Compact for Excellence in Higher Education" compact.

For him, the greatest challenge facing Middlebury, and higher education more broadly, is defending academic freedom and, with it, democracy. Over recent decades, public trust in higher education has fractured.

"[Higher education was] that place where I and everyone had the possibility to participate in the fullness of democratic life," Baucom said. "There was a consensus, and it was not politically divided. We've lost that consensus…We need to return, or find a new path so that people really believe that college represents the possibility that our democracy can realize itself more fully."

Earlier this fall, Baucom launched a Strategic Planning Initiative, Middlebury's first of its kind in more than a decade. According to an Oct. 29 news announcement from the college, the plan will clarify the school's mission, sharpen its priorities and identify concrete goals for the next several years.

"A strategic planning process, which is primarily and generally for the college itself, is also a way of making a case for college, making a case for higher education, making a case for the liberal arts, and it's urgent," Baucom said.

This isn't his first go at strategic planning. He worked on the 2030 plan at UVA and on a "Strategic Vision" at Duke University as chair of the English department. But he explained that those schools are markedly different from Middlebury; they run major hospital systems and sports franchises, prioritize research and run multiple schools under their institution. Middlebury's project is focused solely on the liberal arts.

"We know our core and so there's a clarity of purpose here," Baucom said. "We know everything emanates from residential undergraduate education."

The strategic plan is being led by a 13 person steering committee, co-chaired by Professor of Global Health Jessica Holmes and Associate Professor of Chemistry AJ Vasiliou. The committee includes faculty, staff, students and trustees charged with gathering community input and articulating long term goals for the college.

It also consists of 11 working groups answering specific questions about strengthening the college's core, how the college should connect more intentionally with Vermont and its global programs and how to address issues in higher education. The plan held its first open meeting on Dec. 2 in Wilson Hall, and another is scheduled for Jan. 15.

"My aspiration is for us to be the best liberal arts college in the country, in the world," Baucom said. "I want to be the best. I want your education to be the best. I want your experiences to be the best. I want our faculty and staff's experience to be the best."

That aspiration is rooted not only on Middlebury's campus but in the local community that surrounds it. Since moving here, Baucom has been struck by Vermont's commitment to preserving its natural landscape and the strength of small-scale civic life. On Fourth of July Weekend, he and his wife Wendy attended the Great Bristol Outhouse Race to watch heats of outhouses being pushed in a fierce competition on West Street. The moment stuck out to him as a marker of what small town Vermont life and community can be like.

Baucom believes the college must understand itself as part of the solution to Vermont's numerous problems, including housing scarcity, population decline and a child care crisis. He recently joined more than 150 community members at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Otter Creek Child Center on Weybridge Street, a project the college subsidized.

"Thinking about how we can participate in economic vitalization is a really crucial thing and I want [the college] to be really good partners for the state of Vermont," Baucom said.

The mentality of looking beyond campus shapes his view of Middlebury's global programs. Baucom visited several Schools Abroad sites in May, including Madrid, Paris, Florence, Rabat and Oxford.

"I can't understand Middlebury if I don't know what our schools what our [other] schools are like," Baucom said.

The contrast between sites — "the urban intensity of Rabat" versus "the dreamy spires of Oxford," as he called them — prompted him to think about how to better integrate the Vermont campus with its global network.

Middlebury's foregrounding of global communities and global impact has also directed Baucom's direction as a scholar. His recent academic research has targeted various intersections and overlaps between the humanities and climate change. Part of his interest in coming to Middlebury was its commitment to environmental studies and the climate crisis. This new orientation for his scholarly work has recapitulated his love of teaching.

"I haven't taught in 10 years, and I want to teach again, and I want to start teaching courses at that point of intersection between the climate future, climate humanities and literary studies," he said.

Baucom is currently working on a monograph project.

"The central question is: Does the climate future have what, in legal terms, is called standing? Standing in that legal matter means that you have the right or the ability to bring a claim, and you're recognized as a party with rights. So does the future have standing?"

When he's not walking, thinking about how to solve the crisis in American higher education or pondering the future's standing, Baucom has been spending his time around campus, getting to know the school. He strolled through the fall Student Activities Fair, stopping by clubs' tables to talk. He has attended rehearsals for student productions like "These Shining Lives" and "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder." He hosted the board of Dolci, Middlebury's student run restaurant, to cook a meal in his house. Though he said not every community interaction is posted on his Instagram account, several have been.

An Instagram account is not only new for a Middlebury president, it's new for Baucom as well. He never used social media before coming to campus.

"It's just turned really fun because it feels like a reminder every day not to let myself get trapped in my office. So the fact of having an Instagram account helps me think, oh, like, where can I be? Like, who can I get to meet?" Baucom said.

His next step is an abbreviated version of the "Ross Challenge," a mythical endeavor in which students attempt to spend all of J-Term shuttered inside the Ross Commons complex. Baucom clarified that he does not condone this idea. But to him, just 24 hours in a building doesn't seem too bad.

"I just want to experience what it's like to actually be a student, living in a dorm, eating in a dorm, studying in a dorm in the middle of winter," Baucom said.

With a growing list of aspirations and expanding sets of problems for Middlebury to address in the years ahead, Baucom's tenure as Middlebury's president won't be easy. But he is up for challenges — all kinds.

DAVIS LIBRARY TO CLOSE RESEARCH DESK, CITING DECLINE IN STUDENT USE AND DEPARTMENTAL RESTRUCTURE

MET LY/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Research Desk in Davis Library has seen a decrease in student engagement over the past few years. Students can access research related resources directly from librarians at the desk.

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departure of many full-time librarians in the years following the height of the Covid-19. Until now, only three of those seven positions have been filled, while two were entirely eliminated. One was eliminated during Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and another earlier this year due to budget cuts, according to Wright.

Adjusting to these constraints, RI&D will see a shift from their current liaison model to an experimental team model. Instead of a librarian being assigned to a set of departments, there will be three teams — Humanities, STEM and Arts — of librarians. Some will work on multiple teams.

"This helps distribute the workload across fewer people and helps us provide more consistent services when librarian staffing changes," Wright explained.

Associate Professor of Economics Tanya Byker frequently integrates RI&D support into courses such as Regression Analysis. Julia Deen, the Humanities & Social Sciences and Data Services librarian, is listed on the syllabus as an available resource which helps offload the pressure put on professors.

"In Regression Analysis, I am going to have probably between 70 and 80 students, and they're doing research projects," Byker said. "I could give them more time helping with the software if I could hand off a little bit of the data advising to someone at the library."

For students, individualized consultations are helpful. Alpana Bakshi '26, who consulted with Deen over the summer for a research project, said the one-on-one approach was invaluable.

"[Deen] was really thorough in trying to find different things that might help," Bakshi said. "When it comes to research, professors are very knowledgeable on where to look and recommending specific papers, but I found that [research librarians are] for getting into the nitty gritty and getting into the weeds."

Bakshi added that Deen's follow-up emails and continued accessibility shaped her positive experience. Bakshi is now working with Deen on two additional research projects this semester.

"Sometimes I feel like [the research services] is untapped," Bakshi said. "I don't know any of my peers who have gone to Julia or even the library for data help."

According to a survey conducted by Middlebury professors between December 2024 and February 2025, over 80% of Middlebury students use generative artificial intelligence (AI) in their coursework. With the rise of student AI use, Wright argued that research librarians have become even more essential. Even with discipline-specific AI tools, she noted that students still need guidance from a professional to help them interpret, navigate, and apply those tools responsibly and correctly.

"I think [AI] particularly helps researchers who already understand how academic research works," Wright explained. "For students that don't have that understanding, they're less able to analyze what the AI tool is throwing back at them."

Byker echoed this view. "I've been steeped in [data] literature, so I can ask AI a question that's really knowledgeable, […] but [AI] would have been of no use to me if I hadn't known any literature," Byker said.

"It's comforting to know that it's a person that has gone and looked at the data and [is able to make] more complex connections that can't be done by AI right now," Bakshi said.

Committee-led selection process for student Commencement speaker reinstated with binding speech agreement

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Editor in Chief

Last spring, the college temporarily changed the process for choosing a student Commencement speaker, selecting Student Government Association (SGA) President Brandon Straker '25 to deliver a speech without the routine input of a student and staff-led committee. This change was made due to controversies over the speeches of the two previous commencement speakers, who deviated from their approved scripts to accuse the college of complacency in the war in Gaza. For this February's Commencement ceremony, the process has returned to an open call for graduates to submit recorded videos of their speeches for consideration.

In an added step this year, the chosen speaker will be required to review, acknowledge and adhere to a signed agreement to stick to their approved speech, according to Vice President for Student Affairs Smita Ruzicka.

"It is important to emphasize to potential speakers that the Commencement speech is intended to be celebratory and inspirational," Ruzicka wrote in an email to The Campus.

At the Spring 2024 Commencement ceremony, student speaker Adayliah Ley '24 criticized the college's investments in companies that manufacture products used in the Gaza war or contribute to arms manufacturing. At last February's Commencement, Faith Wood '24.5 also condemned the institution's alleged complacency in the war, accused it of failing its students and suggested that community members withhold donations to the college. Both speeches sparked both heavy backlash and praise online.

In the spring, Ruzicka confirmed the college administration's concerns over the offended feelings of audience members who watched these two unexpected speeches. Administrators disapproved of what Ruzicka called the circumvention of the selection process, suggesting that students on the committees knew that the speakers they selected planned to veer off-script.

Speech submissions, due on Dec.13, will be judged by three to four student leaders from the class of 2025.5 and two or three staff members who work in Student Affairs and Communications and Marketing.

"The decision to move away from a committee-led process was always meant to be temporary while we reviewed the process and determined what meaningful changes needed to be made," Ruzicka wrote.

ELIZA BERNENE/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Four of six Honor Code Amendments pass student and faculty votes

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examinations, with only 45.8% of voters supporting the idea. While students voted 73.5% in favor of removing the moral obligation for students to report honor code violations, the faculty then voted it down, with only 15.5% in favor. The AIC believes that the two outcomes were linked. Many faculty believed that removing the moral obligation would undermine unproctored exams.

"Faculty pointed out that even if students choose not to report honor code violations, it is important to be clear that the right thing to do is to report," the AIC wrote in a joint statement to The Campus. The current AIC consists of Professor of English Timothy Billings, Professor of Education Jonathan Miller-Lane and Professor of Economics Obie Porteous.

"Although two of the changes we proposed based on this input did not end up passing the required student and faculty votes, we feel like the process did generate a lot of helpful attention to and discussion of academic integrity that will help strengthen the culture of academic integrity on campus going forward," the AIC wrote.

The student vote on allowing faculty proctoring was more divided. While almost half of students voted in fwavor, a few more worried that more proctoring would undermine trust.

"Many students felt that cheating is more of a problem on take-home exams and assignments rather than on in-person, unproctored exams," the AIC wrote.

In his email to students announcing the results, Joe Russell wrote that the AIC has drafted "guidelines for faculty for administering in-person exams to help promote more consistent and equitable practices across the college."

Students largely agreed upon the decision to adjust a range of sanctions for honor code violations, with 89.2% voting yes.

"Being punished for unintentional plagiarism during a very stressful time of your academic career, in a place where you're still learning the consequences, strong disciplinary action seems over the top," Sarisa Techasukij '28 said. "Allowing the student to understand the consequences of those actions were they to happen in a different setting is the most vital part."

Faculty agreed, with 77.8% voting in favor, though some expressed concern that sanctions might become too lenient to deter cheating. To address these concerns, the AIC drafted proposed sanctioning guidelines outlining three tiers of violations and associated penalties. The committee plans to continue reviewing these guidelines annually.

AI usage was a major theme in the review process. Overwhelmingly, the faculty approved incorporating uncited AI usage into the definition of plagiarism, with 98.2% voting yes. Still, with rapidly shifting AI technology, the AIC hopes to continue discussing AI policy.

"The review committee's interim report made several other recommendations, including developing examples for students on appropriate versus inappropriate use of AI, continuing to monitor development in AI technology, and adapting the types of assessment that faculty use for student work," the AIC wrote.

Professor of Linguistics and Arabic Usama Soltan suggested that returning to written exams would help students rely less on AI since they would be held accountable by the structured setting.

"If all the assignments are done outside of class, then you really don't know who is benefiting from acquiring knowledge, critiquing knowledge, producing knowledge, working on problem-solving skills — there are all these skills that we target in our classes that some of these technologies can be an easy shortcut for," Soltan said.

The AIC hopes that this review will continue to spark conversation concerning academic integrity. Though formal Honor Code reviews happen every four years, the Academic Integrity Committee will remain active to discuss a continued culture of transparency.

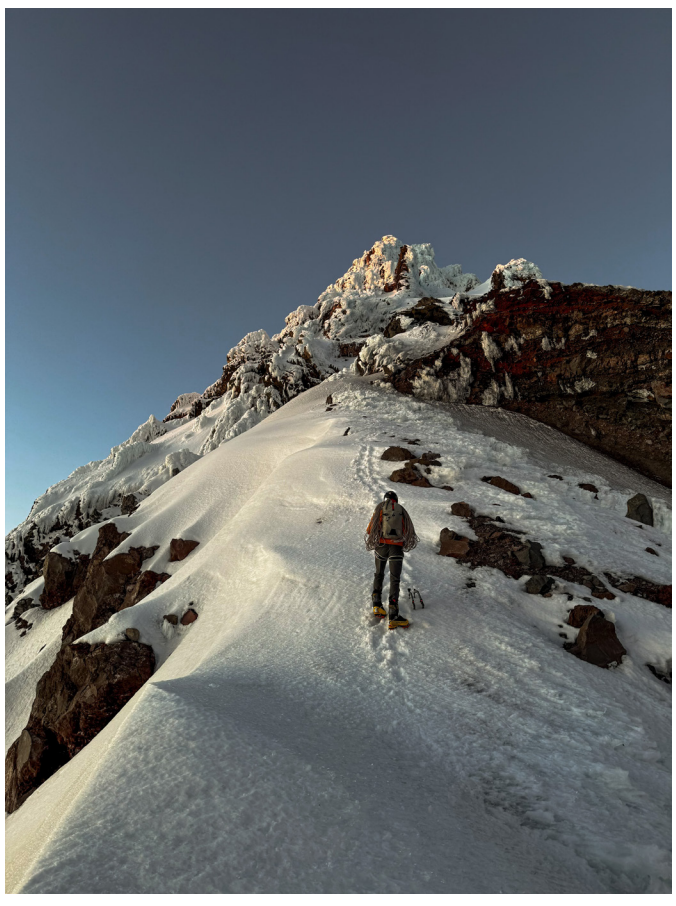
SKILES ROBERTS-SALVADOR/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

WINNERS OF THE STUDY ABROAD PHOTO CONTEST

The winners of this year's study abroad photo contest are Aidan Brennan '26.5 taking first and third place and Mary Elliot '26 taking second place. The photos are on temporary display in Sunderland Hall and will go on permanent display in the Davis Family Library.

First Place: Climbing with the Cows by Aidan Brennan '26.5

Second Place: Kitten in Morocco by Mary Elliot '26



Third Place: Following the Footsteps by Aidan Brennan '26.5

PALANA SEES SHARP DROP IN MEMBER-RESIDENTS, RISKS LOSING STATUS AS SOCIAL HOUSE

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verified by Aassociate Ddean for Sstudent Llife AJ Place.

Reslifesidential Life expects rooms in social houses to be filled primarily by members of the corresponding student organizations so the houses can better carry out their missions and create an enjoyable experience for all residents, which has been a challenge for PALANA in recent years.

"Resl Life highly prefers the house to be filled with students who want to live there as opposed to students who are placed through the lottery process," Nettleton shared. "Not only can this lead to issues within the house, it also changes the overall house experience from its intended purpose, and we often hear concerns from students selecting those open spaces [in PALANA] since they are not members and do not want to change the intended experience by living there as non-members."

Prior to each term, student organizations are required to submit rosters indicating the occupancy of their social houses. Residential Life then adds any empty beds to the regular housing lottery system for selection by non-members.

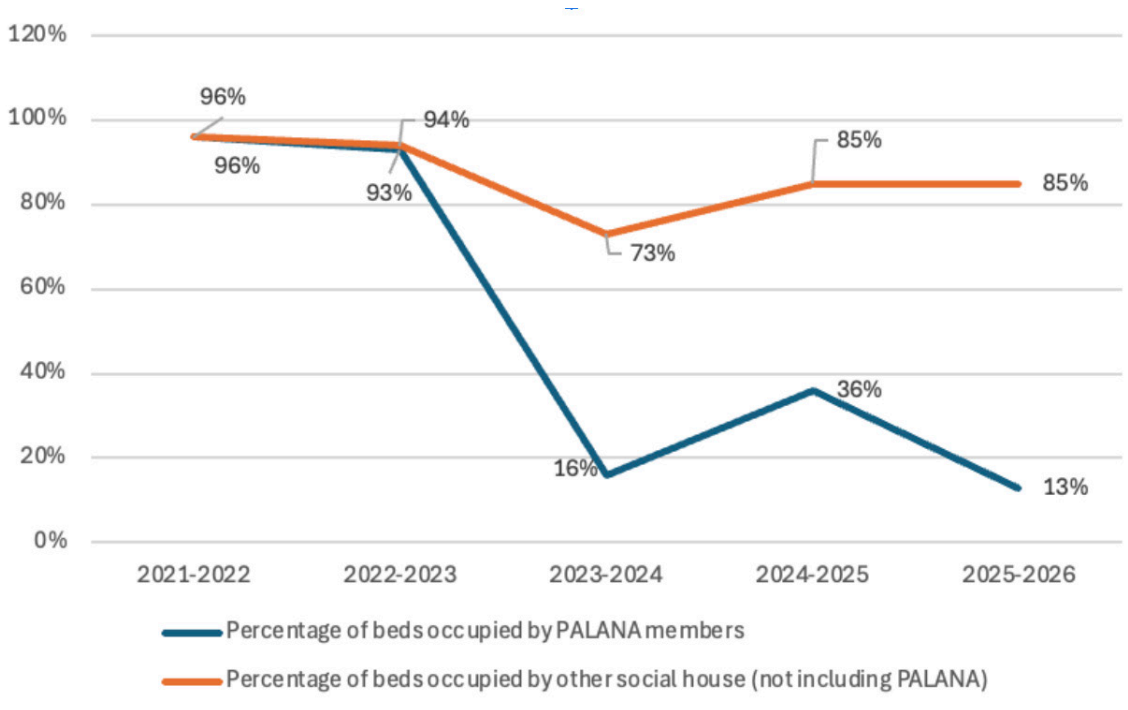
According to roster data provided by Place, PALANA's member-occupancy rate has fallen dramatically over the past five years, dropping from 96% in 2021–2022 to 13% in the current 2025–2026 term. The decline began sharply in 2023–2024, when occupancy fell to 16%, down fromcompared with 93% the previous year. Member-occupancyThe rate rose slightly to 36% in 2024–2025, but fell again this year to 13%. By comparison, the social house average, excluding PALANA, also dipped in 2023–2024, falling to 73% from 94% the year before. However, unlike PALANA's continued decline, the social house average recovered, and stabilizedstabilizing at 85% in recent two years.

In terms of overall occupancy for PALANA, the downward trend persists, with 21 students currently living in the house, down from 27 in fall 2024 and 29 in fall 2023.

Nettleton emphasized that neither the SAO nor Residential Life is in conflict with PALANA, that neither office expects the house to close, and that both are actively communicating with the organization's leadership to support recruitment for the house.

"[Reallocating the house] is not something that's currently being discussed, and we don't want to see the house close," Nettleton said. "Our focus is really how we can help support PALANA."

"Resl Life and student engagement have been in communication with house leadership about this concern over the past three years," Nettleton indicated that the mutual communications have been placed for a while. "Our offices meet monthly with student leadership from all five social houses throughout the academic year."



HUGO ZHANG/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The oversight of social houses was transferred from Community Council to the SAO and ReslifeResidential Life in recent years, and the current executive body has not yet developed a formal process for reallocating a social house to another student organization. The main role of these two offices is to offer support to sustain the missions of the social house and the experience living there.

Nettleton acknowledged the anxiety felt by student leaders, who feel responsible for their organization, and said that she and Place are glad to have received positive feedback from the community.

"They feel a responsibility to their community, so [the problem] can feel scary," Nettleton said. "Both AJ and I are really glad that they are receiving a very positive, responsive support from that kind of rallying."

Nettleton highlighted that PALANA continues to function well with a large membership that builds relationships and connections among students, despite the house's low residency numbers. She said she hopes PALANA can expand its impact by growing from a gathering place into more of a living community.

Medina shared that PALANA will post on its usual communication channels if any further changes occur.

PRESIDENT BAUCOM AND JAMIE HENN '07 TALK CLIMATE ACTIVISM AT "WHAT WORKS NOW" CONFERENCE

By KAI ARROWOOD
Staff Writer

On Nov. 14, college President Ian Baucom sat down with Jamie Henn '07, a climate advocate and founding member of the Sunday Night Environmental Group (SNEG). The discussion, held in Wilson Hall as part of the "What Works Now" conference, marked the 20th anniversary of SNEG and echoed the college's 2005 "What Works" climate summit. The event offered Middlebury the opportunity to publicly discuss its environmental future.

Henn — a co-founder of 350.org, one of the world's largest grassroots climate organizations, and the founder of Fossil Free Media — has spent two decades in frontline climate activism. In 2022, he was named a "Grist Fixer," a title Grist, a nonprofit media organization, gives to emerging leaders developing innovative climate solutions.

Baucom opened by asking Henn about the beginnings of his climate activism, an origin story rooted squarely at Middlebury. Henn first became interested in climate advocacy while taking the J-Term class "What Works Now: Building a New Climate Movement," which he said altered the trajectory of his life.

"I very quickly fell into a class, and a conversation, and a community, which has gone on to define my life and career for the next 20 years," Henn said.

Baucom and Henn went on to discuss the importance of community in fostering activism, which Henn coined the "myth of the solitary genius." Henn worked together with other Middlebury students when founding 350.org, struggling through winter nights in a Burlington apartment with only a space heater for warmth. Henn emphasized the importance of collaboration in struggle, that effective organization came not from an individual but from a space that fostered valuable communication.

"SNEG was a group of people who had so many different interests and projects, but a shared commitment to each other," Henn said. "I think there was some sort of electric magic in the room."

Henn described what began as students organizing in Vermont eventually grew into a movement responsible for global days of action, including the People's Climate March and the Global Climate Strike. Baucom then asked how Henn maintains energy and optimism in a field often defined by existential urgency. Henn encouraged aspiring activists to live in more than one emotional register, to enjoy hope and small wins while simultaneously understanding the magnitude of the issue.

COURTESY PHOTO/ DARIA BISHOP

Jamie Henn '07, a founding member of the Sunday Night Environmental Group (SNEG), spoke with President Baucom as the keynote event for the "What Works Now" event.

"Multiple things can be true at once. We could be living through an incredibly dark time and we don't have to sugarcoat that," Henn said. "At the same time, something else can be true, which is that we're seeing just incredible momentum in the clean energy space."

Throughout the conversation, Baucom drew frequently on prominent academics and historians, which struck a chord with Henn, who majored in history. Their dialogue intertwined ideas about social change with reflections on organizing campaigns and Henn's more recent communications work through Fossil Free Media.

The final portion of the event was reserved for a Q&A with the audience, which ranged from how to find yourself as a student activist to a direct question about how to encourage Middlebury to divest from arms. Henn was eloquent in his replies, encouraging students to "take it slow" and "find momentum" in their climate advocacy.

One audience member asked how to push for the college to divest from arms-related companies — a topic that has remained contentious since the Board of Trustees voted against arms divestment in Oct. 2024. Baucom chose not to respond directly, instead inviting Henn to answer. Henn encouraged the audience member to find new avenues of activism if they found themselves stuck on the issue of divestment. Since 2012, 350.org has driven 1,300 institutions to divest from fossil fuels.

The talk fit well into the inspiring collection of panels and lectures put on in the rest of the conference, offering both students and alumni a new way of thinking about the climate movement.

The Newest Entertainment Option in Middlebury
RETRO REALM
MIDDLEBURY VT
10 Washington Street in Shaw's Plaza
Open until 10 PM on Fridays and Saturdays
Thursday Night College Special: All-You-Can-Play $10/Person 7-9 PM

Otter Creek Yoga Equity Project continues endeavors towards social justice

By ROHINA MAHADIK
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / JOANNA COLWELL

Hope Elliot, Mireya Guerra, Joanna Colwell work together to bring the Yoga Equity Program to life at Otter Creek Yoga.

Since its launch in the fall of 2019, the Otter Creek Yoga Equity Project (YEP) has continued to provide a meaningful and welcoming space for BIPOC students and Middlebury town residents alike to relax and forge connections. Over the years, it has grown to be more than just an affinity space for recreation. It has also fulfilled the vision of co-founders Joanna Colwell and Natasha Chang of creating an environment built on social justice and mutual care.

Colwell — who is also the director of Otter Creek Yoga — said the idea for a BIPOC-specific yoga class emerged from an anti-racism workshop held at the studio in 2019. Chang, a mental health professional and then an instructor at Middlebury College, approached Colwell afterward with the idea for a class designed intentionally for BIPOC participants.

Chang also proposed offering to pay attendees as a tangible incentive to join.

"If you pay people, it's just a little extra incentive," Colwell said. "We thought most of the people who would come would be Middlebury College students because Natasha was teaching there at the time."

To fund the first YEP session, Colwell and Change taught a sun salutations workshop.

While Covid-19 initially forced YEP to temporarily shut down, it also brought along an anonymous donor willing to fund the project, allowing Colwell to re-start classes over Zoom with the help of instructor Sasha Finnell. Finnell continues to teach the BIPOC classes on Sundays at 4 p.m. at the studio's location in the Marblework's building.

Now entering its sixth year, YEP remains a meaningful presence for students who have participated throughout their college career.

"I went to the graduation last spring and I was just so proud of [the students] because they've been in the studio all four years," Colwell said. "The feedback has honestly been amazing and we will usually pass cards once a year and have people say what the class has meant to them which has been really nice."

Keeping the equity project running whilst also continuing to pay all attendees a stipend has not come without its challenges. So far, the project has thrived due to generous donations from their anonymous donor and support from the Vermont Community Foundation who are the administrators of their grant.

However, Colwell is now looking to diversify YEP's funding to keep the project going long-term.

"I think any non-profit has this experience and the project has expanded so much that it takes about $5000 a month to run, which includes paying the teachers and of course the stipend," Colwell said. "We just did a fundraiser called 'the sacred nap' which is just an hour of relaxation where people can come in, lie down and get sung to for an hour."

The sacred nap fundraiser raised $3000 towards funding the project, with Colwell emphasizing that a repeat of the event is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 18. Students interested in signing up should contact joanna@ottercreekyoga.com for more information.

Reflecting on the growth of both YEP and Otter Creek Yoga overall, she emphasized that at the heart of it all lies a strong commitment to social justice.

"We are always working hard to make our space as accessible and inclusive as possible and I guess the equity project is just one example of that. People who are not a racialized minority can also attend other classes for a very low cost or no cost at all, which is just our commitment that everyone deserves to relax their minds," Colwell said.

She further advocates for social justice by using the space for film screenings and conversations in support of Palestine, and screening documentaries to raise money for people actively working at the grassroots level.

"We are very grateful that our business continues to thrive and the marble works is a great place for our studio, which is accessible by both students and town residents alike plus the rent is affordable. I'm very excited to celebrate 20 years of the studio in the marble works building on January 1st," Colwell said.

Local beekeeper and author Kirk Webster featured at Ilsey Public Library VT Author Series

By LILA DELUCA
Contributing Writer

On Nov. 13, the Ilsey Public Library — in partnership with the Vermont Book Shop — hosted Kirk Webster for one of three author series events at the library's temporary location at 30 Main Street. The event featured Webster's new book titled "Many Best Kept Secrets: A Wonderful and Unusual Life Around Honey Bees", which reflects his 50+ years of experience with honeybees and aims to preserve his organic-based beekeeping approach for future generations.

During the event, Webster spoke about his deep roots in Addison County and the experiences that shaped "Many Best Kept Secrets." He moved to the region from northern New Jersey in 1972 shortly after finishing high school, quickly embracing what would become a lifelong commitment to beekeeping.

Throughout his career, he relied on a network of mentors and influences — most notably world-renowned Vermont beekeeper and his first boss, Charles Mraz, and Japanese farmer Masanobu Fukuoka, known for his natural farming philosophy that rejects chemical and fossil-fuel inputs.

In his book, Webster highlights this theme of mentorship as a driving force in the development of his unconventional beekeeping methodology, which prioritizes an organic treatment of his colonies to produce clean, high quality honey using zero chemicals, which in many ways stands out from classic beekeeping methods.

"The industrial agriculture mentality is treating the problem with the next new chemical," Webster said to the audience.

In the early chapters of his book, he highlights the potent beekeeping legacy of the Champlain Valley.

"[The valley] has been known for beekeeping since the European settlement," he said.

Addison County's thriving beekeeping community, which had long drawn farmers from around the country, was jeopardized in the 1980s when short seasons and harsh Vermont winters made the south a more attractive region for commercial beekeeping. According to Webster, this shift occurred with the winterization of colonies. This key advancement in beekeeping enabled climatically marginalized beekeeping communities, such as the longstanding coalition in Vermont, to protect its vibrant culture as more attention was diverted to commercialized beekeeping down south.

Webster warned, however, that climate instability now threatens beekeeping nationwide. Nearly 60% of colonies across the U.S. were lost last winter, which was one of the worst recorded years for American beekeeping.

With climate pressures mounting and fewer people entering the trade, Webster said the cultural and ecological importance of beekeeping is increasingly at risk.

"Beekeeping is evaporating from Western culture," he said.

Still, he emphasized the efforts of local keepers and writers to preserve this knowledge. Through storytelling and documentation, Webster hopes to rekindle appreciation for honeybees and natural agriculture in Vermont and beyond.

While each year Webster is tending for fewer colonies as he is passing his honeybees down to a younger local beekeeper, he plans to continue to share his wealth of knowledge for organic beekeeping through another book focusing specifically on the details of his beekeeping methodology which he plans to start writing this coming winter.

The author series program at the Ilsey Public Library has served as a venue for showcasing the unique works of Vermont authors for the past four years.

"Before IPL had to move to its temporary location, we had a VT author presentation each month," Ilsley librarian Renee Ursitti wrote in an email to the Campus.

She shared that the VT Author Series came to life in 2023, but was on hiatus while the library moved to its temporary location. Now, with the help of Vermont Book Shop owner Becky Dayton, the series is back.

"Both Becky and I get many requests from local authors for programming," Ursitti wrote. "By creating this on-going series, we were able to provide an opportunity for authors to connect with readers as well as our community to learn about the talent that lives right next door. Part of the library's mission is to support local authors."

Editor's Note: Senior Local Editor Katrina Schwarz '26 contributed reporting to this article.

COURTESY PHOTO / ERIC KILLORIN

VT Author Series, co-hosted by Ilsley Library and Vermont Book Shop bring writer and beekeper Kirk Webster to speak.

Students join farmworkers at Hannaford to call for adoption of Milk with Dignity program

By LAURA GOMEZ
Contributing Writer

On Saturday, Nov. 15, the entrance to the Middlebury Hannaford on Court Street was crowded with students, farmworkers, and Addison County residents rallying in support of Migrant Justice's Milk with Dignity campaign. Participants gathered to urge the supermarket chain to join the farmworker-designed human rights program, which establishes labor standards for dairy farms supplying store-brand milk.

The Middlebury picket was one of several coordinated actions across Vermont that day. Migrant Justice also led mass pickets at Hannaford stores in Morrisville and South Burlington, continuing the years-long effort to pressure the company to participate in Milk with Dignity.

The Milk with Dignity program establishes standards on dairy farms for rest breaks, fair housing, paid sick days and safe working conditions, and it includes a third-party monitoring system for reporting violations. Participating companies pay a premium on their store-brand milk, which supports farms in meeting the code of conduct. Hannaford has not agreed to join, prompting continued public demonstrations statewide.

Matt Stevenson '27.5, a co-leader of Migrant Justice at Middlebury College (MJaM), said the group in front of Hannaford was focused on speaking directly with customers.

"We were educating shoppers about the Milk with Dignity program and asking them not to cross the picket line," Stevenson said.

Saturday's action in Middlebury began with a group setting up tables, signs and informational flyers near the store entrance. Early participants lined the sidewalk with posters to catch the attention of arriving shoppers.

Within 30 minutes, the sidewalk filled with students holding handmade signs and speaking with organizers. Members of MJaM were joined by students from Bennington College and Williams College. Organizers offered Mexican champurrado to participants as they joined the line, and students walked the sidewalk with cups and passed them out to new arrivals.

As the demonstration gained momentum, chants in English and Spanish echoed across the parking lot. Picketers held their signs toward passing cars, many of which responded with supportive honks. Shoppers approaching the store received flyers explaining the Milk with Dignity program and the goals of the campaign. Before long, the line stretched across most of the storefront.

Sanza Parzybok '28.5, who attended the picket, said the store's reaction intensified as the crowd grew larger.

"It was crazy to see the stores' response to the event. They sent out a lot of security, like 30 guys, a couple police, and at least two fully armed officers," Parzybok said. "They were scanning the parking lot and guarding the store entrance."

Stevenson explained that supporters hope the program will guarantee farmworkers a role in shaping the conditions on the farms where they work.

"If Hannaford were to join, the Milk with Dignity program would institute a farmworker-written code of conduct with a 3rd-party monitoring body," Stevenson said.

Throughout the afternoon, students who were new to MJaM introduced themselves to organizers. Several attendees said they first learned about the program during the Middlebury Migration Conference in October, where dairy workers spoke about their lives on Vermont farms. The event became an entry point for many students who later chose to join the picket.

LAURA GOMEZ / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
A picket line organized by Milk With Dignity forms outside of Middlebury's Hannaford location.

"Standing with farmworkers and the Middlebury community showed me what real solidarity looks like," Omar Jimenez Jr. '27 said.

Jimenez Jr. said hearing workers speak at the event strengthened his motivation to participate.

"Their courage in speaking out about abuse and inequality is powerful," he said.

Some students stood near the entrance to distribute materials, while others held large banners facing Route 7. The chants and activity created a strong presence along the front of the store.

"Standing with farmworkers and the Middlebury community showed me what real solidarity looks like."

Stevenson said the turnout demonstrated how students can engage in local organizing and collaborate with the broader community.

"It was powerful to gather together and remember that we are part of a larger community in Addison County and that we have power through collective action to fight for human rights and dignity," Stevenson said.

As the event came to a close, supporters shared tamales and champurrado. Several people stayed to talk even after tzhe picket formally ended. Students helped pack up materials and exchanged contact information with organizers. Community members also discussed upcoming events and ways to remain involved with Migrant Justice.

Migrant Justice organizers said they plan to continue hosting demonstrations, educational events, and outreach across Vermont until the company adopts the program. MJaM plans to keep partnering with the statewide organization as the campaign continues. Organizers noted that sustained participation from students, residents, and farmworkers will remain essential in the effort to bring Hannaford into the Milk with Dignity program.

"It was powerful to gather together and remember that we are part of a larger community in Addison County and that we have power through collective action to fight for human rights and dignity."

WHEN PUSHING THE LIMIT BECOMES DESTRUCTIVE

Op-Ed

__Tessa Husted__ is a member of the class of 2025.5.

I give the laces of my cleats a quick tug before jogging out onto the turf. Nervously, I nod at my teammates, a conglomeration of ex-collegiate players and middle-aged men clad in fluorescent t-shirts. My first touch sends the ball six feet away, and I wince. Shoot, what was that? This is my first time playing in the Shelburne pickup league, and I want to make a good first impression. Sure, it's supposed to be just for fun, but I can't shake the voice in my head: You can do better.

Perfectionist thoughts still plague me on the soccer field, even though I stopped playing seriously before college. Years of competition trained me to push myself to the limit: Footskill sessions on the hard gym floor, beep tests that made my legs burn and my lungs ache, penalty shootouts after every practice. I worried that if I wasn't the same driven athlete I was in high school, I wouldn't be respected at Middlebury.

At Middlebury, being athletic is the norm. Whether that's because one-third of the population is student-athletes, or because of the vast number of year-round outdoor activities, the college tends to attract a certain kind of person. In the last two decades, many students have struggled with over-exercise and eating disorders, problems exacerbated by the perfectionist culture around campus. One story by a Middlebury student even made it into the New York Times. Though I love and deeply appreciate being part of such an athletic community, it has been incredibly challenging for me to transition away from competitive sports. I've always found pride in my athleticism, and I wasn't sure if I still deserved that if my athletic pursuits became less goal-driven.

Like me, Francesca Bradley '25.5 struggles with her relationship to competition and exercise in college. "I exercise more when I'm at Middlebury than when I'm at home…because it's just such a huge part of life here," she said.

I couldn't agree more. It feels like it's just one of the expectations of being a student here. Even for club sports members, it's typical to fit in a run or gym session before practice in the afternoon. The current "marathon epidemic," as Francesca aptly put it, speaks to the intensity of athletics on campus. For many students, it's not just about exercising for fun, but meeting a milestone. There's nothing inherently wrong with being goal-oriented, but it can be dangerous when exercise becomes intertwined with self-worth. My own voice is a constant reminder: You only ran for a half hour today? That's not enough.

The morning light slanted through the library's second-floor window as Francesca talked. "It's not like people are outwardly comparing… It feels like some very unspoken, subtle thing," she continued thoughtfully. Her words sounded remarkably familiar to me. The 'unspoken' element of exercise habits seems to be well articulated by the concept of "effortless perfection" that author Caralena Peterson (BLSE '23) describes in her book, "The Effortless Perfection Myth." You have to be fit, but you can't let anyone know you're trying.

Middlebury has long been a place of athletic excellence, claiming 123 NESCAC Championships and 49 team national championships throughout its history. Student-athletes have a lot to live up to, and they can also set very high expectations for themselves. Lulu Baker '27 echoed this sentiment to me last year when we connected to explore the dynamics on her cross-country team. "Some people can put way too much pressure on themselves with school, being a twenty-year-old in college, and being an athlete," she said.

"It can be very hard to watch," Lulu reflected. I was impressed with her perceptiveness and glad that she didn't seem to put this pressure on herself. Perfectionism is particularly relevant to cross-country, where success is often defined by clear-cut goals.

In Lulu's time on the team, a culture of care and support has helped minimize the impacts of this pressure. I listened closely as she described how Nicole Wilkerson, the Head Cross Country Coach, cultivates a supportive atmosphere. Meetings about body image, conversations around team culture, and individual check-ins are some of Nicole's "motherly" approaches, as Lulu fondly called them. Nicole is clearly incredibly attuned to the perfectionist tendencies of her athletes, which is especially important in an endurance sport where success is tied to concrete numbers.

"Managing expectations is so much more of my job than managing what the workouts are," Nicole emphasized as we chatted in the busy halls of the athletic center. She has clearly dealt with a lot of this in her work and seemed saddened by the amount of pressure that athletes can put on themselves. To combat this perfectionist narrative, she tells her runners to strive for "B+ days," a lesson that could extend to any athletic student at Middlebury. For others, such as Francesca, reorienting exercise around fun has helped her shift her relationship with athletics.

I have long struggled to transition away from competitive soccer and develop a less serious relationship with exercise. Despite continuing to play recreationally, it feels harder to define myself as an athlete in a culture that deeply values intensity and performance. While Middlebury students often know how to push themselves, it is also important to know how to stop. Fitness shouldn't be synonymous with self-worth, yet it often feels that way here. The "work hard, play hard" culture can be destructive, and as Francesca emphasized, it is equally important to "rest hard."

Is knowing my Constitutional rights too political?

Op-Ed

__Mya Rosa Díaz__ is a member of the class of 2027.

Last spring, our college administration censored Migrant Justice at Middlebury (MJaM), a student solidarity network for Migrant Justice. In response to our efforts to keep our community informed about our constitutional rights to safety and free speech, we experienced the sudden revocation of previously awarded funding. We were told that if we wanted answers, we should meet with Hannah Ross, the college's general legal counsel, and Smita Ruzicka, the vice president of student affairs. At a time when information about these rights has been removed from government websites, and confusion and fear are on the rise, we were extremely concerned by our college administration's decision to suddenly and arbitrarily limit community education on our constitutional rights. And we still are.

This past March, MJaM caught our administration's attention after working on a variety of projects on "Know Your Rights" (KYR) information. These included classroom presentations on the 1st, 4th, 5th, and 6th amendments, workshops on what to do and not do if approached by an immigration officer on campus, and training sessions on being an effective bystander when someone encounters law enforcement. We applied for and were awarded a grant from the CCE to laminate a series of educational KYR wallet cards, but the project was abruptly terminated at our administration's request.

When we met with Hannah Ross and Smita Ruzicka, we were told that the reason behind the cancellation of our funding was because of a classic excuse: "We do not want to attract too much attention to the college." Hannah Ross stated that the worry that prompted our censorship was due to a rumor that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) "is treating the distribution of KYR and other materials as obstruction of justice, and thus, a criminal charge." When we asked for further elaboration, however, she stated that she "did not know enough" to say more. We could not find a single public instance of what she claimed actually occurring.

To comply with the administration, MJaM were barred from using any institutional resources for funding or general support for the production of KYR cards. If we were to continue working on these projects, we had to do so entirely on our own – which is exactly what we did. So, not only did we find that our college was actively complying with something blatantly unconstitutional under the cowardly excuse of "worry," but it also tried to silence a student-led initiative working to fulfill what should be the college's responsibility…based on nothing more than fear and rumor.

This semester, some of the students who had been working on those KYR projects helped craft the Rights to Safety and Free Speech Student Referendum. This proposed referendum addressed the same topics that MJaM worked on last spring and was presented to the Student Government Association (SGA) earlier this October, only to be rejected on Nov. 5.

At a Q&A forum with Ruzicka and Ross this past Nov. 17, students had the opportunity to ask questions about college policy to the administration staff and the SGA. What we heard were precisely the same excuses we heard at our meeting last May, with the added "501c3" claim.

Hannah Ross stated that "Middlebury, as a 501c3 (our legal status as a non-profit educational corporation), needs to give space to the members of its community to exercise their voice, but not take positions on political issues." Upon further questioning as to why educating our community on our constitutional rights is being labeled "a political cause" — when the school funds events around political issues all the time — both Ruzicka and Ross were unable to give a proper response. Many students at the forum expressed concerns about the discrepancies regarding which legal measures are preventing the administration from supporting rights-based education.

What truly is the risk, then? How can the college claim to live by its motto, Scientia et Virtus, when the spread of certain knowledge is restricted, and civic virtue is precluded? Failing to provide your student body with the resources to thrive and express themselves safely and freely on campus, to me, is the actual danger.

Although many questions remained unanswered, students who had initially been working on the KYR projects under MJaM were invited for a second conversation with Ruzicka and Ross to discuss a "potential collaboration". After months of having our resources to distribute this information stripped away, the administration was finally willing to work with us on the matter. We cannot, however, trust that they will actually follow through.

So, what's next? Students have requested another Q&A with college administration this coming J-Term to address the questions and concerns left unanswered — matters that pertain to every single person on campus. The participation of a variety of students at the first forum proved that change is possible when addressed publicly and when an engaged community backs an initiative, building pressure. To get involved and stay informed on our ongoing efforts, follow students who are organizing around these issues on Instagram at @firewall_midd. We need your support. Every voice and every experience is deeply important.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: THE IMPORTANCE OF A LITERARY DEGREE

Op-Ed

__Johanna Nichols__ holds a BS, MS, and MDiv.

I majored in English and Secondary Education. In a 50 year career, I taught all age levels from pre-school to college, trained organizational leaders, directed a state-wide human service organization, and was responsible for programming and development in a quasi-municipal organization.

What did my career require? To quote Professors of English Brett Millier and Jay Parini: "Critical reading, writing compelling arguments", and "developing a personal voice." Essential skills for writing grants, legislation, and compelling speeches to potential donors and investors, presenting a case, and developing and sending marketing and training materials.

What is the value of literature? The qualities of being human are reflected, absorbed, and mirrored in literature. We become our best selves through reading literature, beginning in childhood and continuing through life.

Experience tells me that students must be prepared to think and write for themselves. STEM graduates will need those essential skills to succeed in the realms they will encounter. There are times when you must be your authentic self to succeed. For people in STEM fields, the need to read, research, write and publish is crucial. How to prepare? Be well read! Learn to write well!

For all who hope to be successful in fulfilling relationships, have a family, be a true friend, a reliable colleague, and a contributing member of the community, you must be well-rounded. The study of literature is foundational for expanding your world.

Editor's note: This Letter to the Editor is in response to an Oct. 30 news piece reporting on English department vacancies and the importance of a literary degree.

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SPECS Panther - Menstruation and sports

Op-Ed

Dani Bronk *is a member of the class of 2028.*

For athletes, the phrase "listen to your body" is not foreign. However, many might overlook how listening to oneself connects to the menstrual cycle and its impacts. At SPECS, we acknowledge that not everyone who menstruates identifies as female, and many who identify as female don't menstruate. Therefore, it is important to consider inclusive terminology when recognizing athletes who menstruate. Terms that we use include, but are not limited to: those who menstruate, people with uteruses, and those who are assigned female at birth (AFAB).

The menstrual cycle consists of four distinct stages spanning approximately 28 days, although this varies from body to body. Menstruation occurs between days one and five, and is characterized by the shedding of the uterine lining; this is what many know as a period. Simultaneously, hormone levels in the body decline. Such hormones include estrogen and progesterone, which have impacts on muscle strength and physical performance. Estrogen and progesterone play essential roles in an athlete's function, as estrogen increases nervous system activity, leading to better endurance, strength, speed, and coordination. Progesterone does the opposite, essentially acting as an inhibitor.

Following the menstruation phase, the body transitions into the follicular phase. This phase occurs between days six and 13. During the follicular phase, estrogen levels rise while progesterone levels fall, leading to increases in the body's strength and power. Strength and power increase continuously throughout the follicular phase, as estrogen levels continue to rise and peak in the late follicular phase. In addition to greater strength and power as a result of an increase in estrogen levels, the probability of soft tissue injuries is also lower because estrogen reduces muscle stiffness.

In summary, the body's strength and, thus, athletic performance, peak when estrogen levels are highest and progesterone levels are lowest. Estrogen levels peak around day 14 (depending on the individual), when the body transitions from the late follicular phase into the ovulatory phase. Ovulation is when the egg is released from the ovary, and the body is most fertile. This phase is also characterized by an increase in vaginal discharge.

After this increase in strength and power leading up to the day of ovulation, there is a subsequent decline, and the body returns to its "starting point." This "decline" is characterized by the production of progesterone, the hormone that inhibits strength and power abilities. As the luteal phase progresses, progesterone levels continue to climb. In fact, the luteal phase is sometimes characterized by feelings of weakness. While this can vary from person to person, there is evidence that the luteal phase's increase in progesterone can inhibit muscle building and recovery, contributing to feelings of weakness.

While the correlation between the menstrual cycle and athletic performance isn't frequently discussed, one challenge in athletes who menstruate is commonly talked about: amenorrhea. Amenorrhea is the absence of a period for longer than three months in someone who previously had a period. It can occur when an athlete's calorie intake does not match their output during high-intensity training. Although common and oftentimes overlooked, this is not normal. Amenorrhea can have long-term effects, such as a decrease in bone density, which can lead to stress fractures, an increase in musculoskeletal injuries, and various mental health challenges.

While many believe amenorrhea is a result of not eating enough, this isn't necessarily the case; oftentimes, athletes who menstruate lack intake of specific nutrients to support their bodies. Micronutrient deficiencies are common in AFAB athletes; therefore, consuming a diverse diet and supplementing can better support training loads. Iron, Vitamin D, and Calcium are important nutrients to focus on when considering nutritional intake.

For college students, it can be challenging to maintain a balanced diet when one's options are limited to what's available in the dining halls. So, here is a list of Iron, Vitamin D, and Calcium rich foods you can find in Middlebury dining halls: Animal sources of Iron include: Lean red meat (beef, lamb, pork), poultry (chicken, turkey), seafood and eggs. Plant sources include: Dark green vegetables (spinach), nuts and seeds, and dried fruit. Animal sources of Vitamin D include: Salmon, tuna, cheese, and milk, while plant sources include: Mushrooms, plant-based milk (soy, almond) and orange juice. Calcium can be found in dairy products like milk, cheese, yogurt, and ice cream! Non-dairy Calcium sources include: tofu, almonds, sesame seeds, chia seeds, kale and spinach.

SPECS Panther is a mascot for SPECS (sex positive education for college students) and serves the Middlebury community. As a part of Health & Wellness Education, SPECS Panther seeks to educate and spark independent dialogue, not be the end-all be-all resource on campus. We encourage Midd Kids to break down the walls of silence by engaging in sex-positive conversation — wherever, with whomever and about whatever is most comfortable, easy, and safe for you. Our editions will be educational!

Because of the limited studies on AFAB bodies, knowledge in these fields is inadequate and continued research is necessary. Despite this, we can leverage existing information to better support athletes. If you think you may be struggling with amenorrhea, it is important to consult a medical provider and talk about your symptoms. The primary reason for the underreporting of amenorrhea is its normalization among AFAB athletes; therefore, it is critical to foster ongoing conversation about the menstrual cycle. While much remains to be researched and understood about the menstrual cycle and its effects, it is key to take advantage of the knowledge that is currently available to support athletes.

If you are interested in learning more, below is a brief list of researchers with online platforms who educate about menstruation and sports: Dr. Alyssa Olenick, PhD (@doclyssfitness), Dr. Stacy Sims, PhD (@drstacysims), Dr. Emily Kraus, MD (@emilykrausmd), and Female Athlete Science and Translational Research Program, a cohort of PhD researchers from Stanford University (@ stanfordfastr).

WHO DOES THE SGA REALLY WORK FOR?

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

The Student Government Association's (SGA) Nov. 5 vote to reject a student-led referendum concerning rights for free speech and student protection on our campus raises an important question: Who does the SGA work for? Students, or the Middlebury College administration? We are concerned about the SGA's decision not to allow these students to host their proposed referendum. The decision raises broader questions about SGA's role and effectiveness.

SGA is comprised of passionate students who commit a significant portion of their time as college students to developing meaningful changes to improve the Middlebury experience. We commend initiatives such as sponsoring break buses, which increase the accessibility of the college to students without cars, and reintroducing 10 o'clock Ross, which provides students with late-night food options without overburdening dining services, who are often understaffed.

However, we cannot help but notice that the SGA's decision to refuse the student-led initiative is concerning. The proposed referendum called for an official rejection of the Trump administration's funding compact, prohibiting the college from sharing information about students and faculty with federal law enforcement, providing the college community with legal assistance with immigration-related matters, requiring Middlebury staff to provide proof of identity before asking students for identification, and clarifying that pamphleting and posting on social media are expressions of free speech.

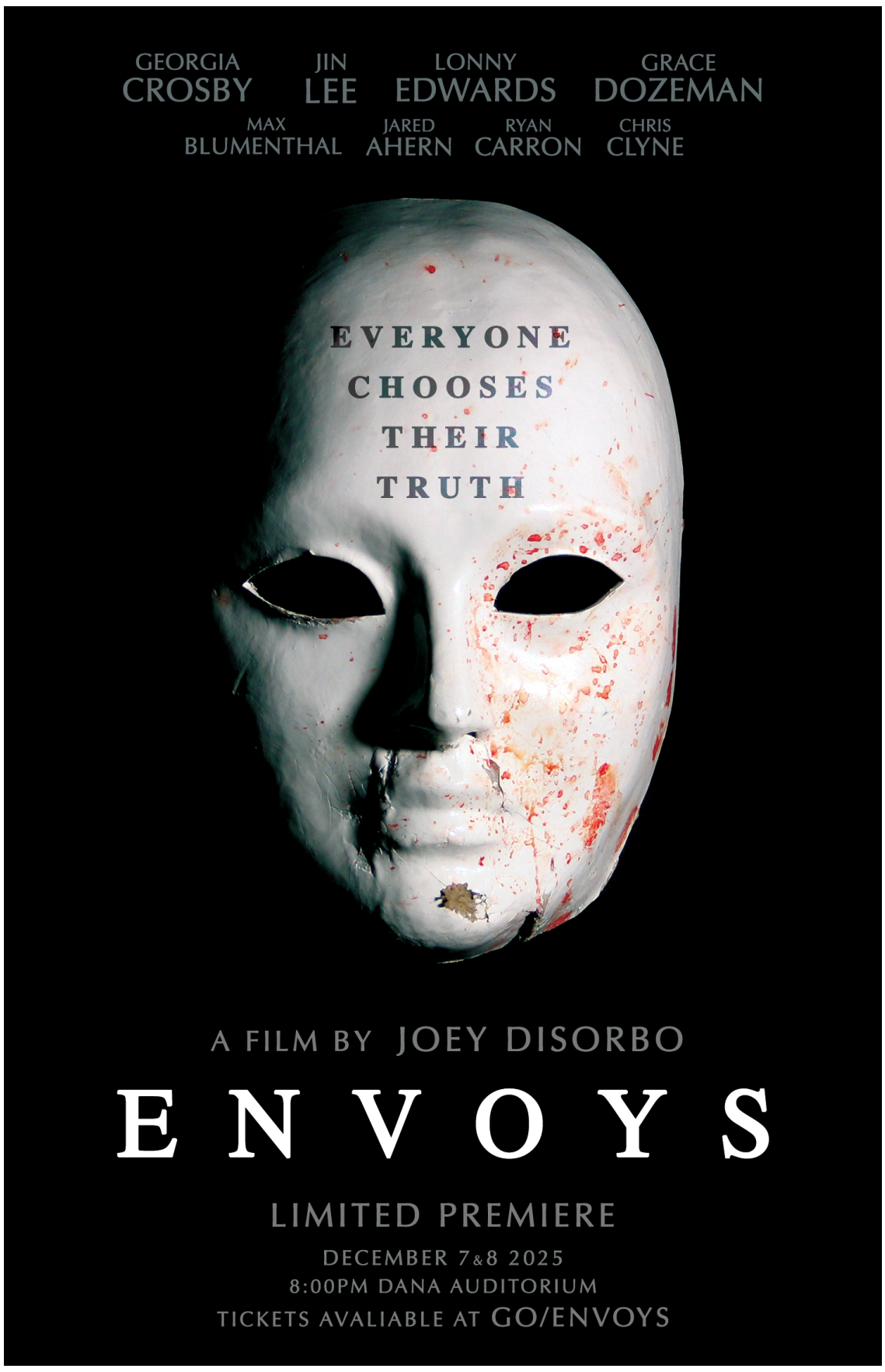
The Editorial Board did not discuss the merits of this proposal in itself, nor do we endorse either side. Instead, we agreed that the SGA should have allowed students the opportunity to vote on this referendum. The referendum might have reached students who were not aware of its proposals. Students might have voted for or against it. We would like to know whether SGA members read this proposal in its entirety, and if they chose to side with the administration's views out of a sense of obligation.

We believe the SGA's open forum with members of the college administration, including general counsel and student affairs staff members, should have taken place before they refused the referendum, rather than after. This would have provided student senators with more voices and perspectives on the referendum, and opened public conversation with the administration earlier. Informed by this conversation, SGA could have made a vote to better represent the student body they are supposed to serve. More broadly, we call on the SGA to provide students with more regular, detailed and honest information about the discussions being held behind closed doors with the administration.

The SGA must not side with the administration without first consulting with students on proposals and ideas. They should have hosted an open forum for the writers of this proposal to share their reasons for advocating a referendum before inviting members of the administration to consult on a student-led policy. The decision to hold a referendum should be made by students, who should have been allowed to hear all sides and make an informed decision before casting their vote. After their referendum proposal was rejected, the organisers created a petition, which, at the time of writing, has 167 signatures. We see this as clear evidence that students are engaged with the referendum material and that a referendum is warranted.

Creating more open-forum town halls as a form of student governance would enable students passionate about a specific topic to engage and share their perspectives and experiences. This would help reduce student and administrative bureaucracy and complement the small-school environment we are proud of. With the refusal to allow this referendum, the SGA feels like a spokesperson of the administration, when it should be the other way around.

We call on more students to participate in the SGA and run for more positions. While we hope that the SGA's refusal to host this referendum starts a broader conversation about its efficacy, we encourage students to participate in its current form. We wonder whether more candidates would be interested in campaigning if the SGA clearly advocated on our behalf and not the administration. More often than not, SGA senators run unopposed, creating a low-quality campaign and a poor environment for conversation and competition. As a result, the SGA has forgotten that it is not a spokesperson for Old Chapel, but instead for Middlebury College students. After all, the clue is in the name. They are the Student Government Association.



A GUIDE OF ARTS AND HAPPENINGS IN OUR BRAVE LITTLE STATE

By LILY BUREN
Contributing Writer

So, you want to walk the walk and talk the talk and get the real Vermont experience #stickseason.

Well, let's start by testing some basic knowledge:

Where is a Vermonter most likely to have a second home?
a. Stoweish
b. Woodstock
c. Newport? Danby? Idk, somewhere in the Northeast Kingdom.

What is the first line to the Vermont state song?
a. "These Green Hills and Silver Waters"
b. "The snow is falling, it's a wonderful day"

Where are the worst drivers from?
a. New York
b. Connecticut
c. Massachusetts

Alright, even if you got those right, don't give yourself a pat on the back just yet — I know it was due to the process of elimination, not any wisp of insider knowledge. That being said, I am not a Middlebury resident and cannot claim to have the inside scoop. I'm from southern Vermont — Brattleboro, to be precise. Before coming to Middlebury, I had never heard of or wanted a SuperPuff to brave the cold, and I still don't know how to pronounce Arc'teryx.

Being from Vermont means going to your town bar on Blackout Wednesday with everyone who graduated from your high school in the last 20 years, never learning world geography in your public school education and hiding from your second-grade teacher at the farmers market. It's about knowing where to find the crispiest cider donuts, placing wagers on the first frost when conversation falls short and having a family friend who carves fiddles in the woods.

Now I don't mean to sound harsh or full of hate for my leaf peeping comrades. On the contrary, I would like to offer a roadmap of sorts for some things to do around our state that may have slipped through the cracks. Let's call it: "A guide of arts and happenings in our brave little state."

Dog Mountain – St. Johnsbury

A haven for dog lovers, complete with a chapel honoring past furry friends, sculpture-dotted trails and a real-life guardian black lab who seems ageless, almost as if he inspired the entire mountain himself.

Dog Mountain was created by folk artist Stephen Huneck and his wife, Gwen, after Stephen survived a fall that left him relearning how to walk – helped along, as he liked to say, by the constant company of his dogs. Today, the walls of the Dog Chapel are filled with thousands of poems, drawings and handwritten notes that cover nearly every surface, commemorating furry friends nearest and dearest.

Norton's Gallery – Orwell

I stumbled across this gallery while musing over an artist-ghost from my past. The funny thing was that I discovered Norton doing the same, turning over memories of loss: He was in the middle of carving 1,000 little red cardinals in honor of his late wife. His woodshop was filled with carvings, yet the two of us simply sat together and watched the lake, sharing some kind of quiet understanding.

Brookfield Floating Bridge – Brookfield

A wooden bridge that literally floats on the water — equal parts charming and mildly concerning. Built in 1820 by Luther Adams and his neighbors, it's the only floating bridge east of the Mississippi, bobbing on pontoons beneath Sunset Lake. And yes, it has been known to occasionally sink…

Big Picture Theater & Café – Waitsfield

Big Picture almost closed for good in 2024, but the community wouldn't let it disappear. Neighbors formed a nonprofit, rebuilt the place piece by piece, and reopened it as "The Bigger Picture." It's now a cozy mix of movies, live music, a small bar and the kind of couch seating that makes every screening feel like you're watching a film in a friend's living room — the kind of spot that survives only because a whole town decides it matters.

Lemon Fair Sculpture Garden – Shoreham

I come here often, as it is right down the road from Middlebury. A retired doctor turned farmer and avid art lover filled his fields with grand sculptures for all to explore — a perfect five-minute escape from campus. Whether it's made of wire, metal, concrete or some other material, you're sure to discover your next favorite sculpture somewhere within the fields. Or, even contribute to a collaborative work of art. The garden most recently featured a community art project where anyone could contribute by tying fabric strips to a metal structure.

The truth is, many of these places aren't niche, underground secrets – well, maybe one or two (I didn't even know about half the Addison County spots until I moved here). Most of them I found by typing "art" or "museum" into Google Maps and clicking whatever popped up. This kind of research is only possible in Vermont: you get just enough options so that there are technically choices, but not so many that you feel overwhelmed. And honestly, that kind of planning leads to the best adventures. The kind where you set out for a tiny garage gallery with no real expectations, only to stop at three general stores, discover the oldest maple leaf fossil in North America and leave unexpectedly moved by the process of uncovering the artist's world of passion.

So, if you ever find yourself bored on a Saturday or just needing to breathe air that hasn't been circulated through Davis for 12 hours, take this as your invitation to wander a little. Pick a dot on the map, follow a hand-painted sign, let yourself get lost in a back road or two. Vermont isn't loud about what it has to offer, but it rewards anyone willing to go looking. And who knows — you might just end up with a new favorite place, or a story that belongs only to you.

COURTESY PHOTO/LILY BUREN

1. The inside of the Big Picture Theatre in Watsfield.
2. Dog Mountain in St. Johnsbury.

DEATH BY LAUGHTER: MCMT'S "A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE AND MURDER"

By ELIZABETH SCHIERMAN
Contributing Writer

A "murderously" good time occurred on the evenings of Nov. 13-15, when audiences gathered in Town Hall Theater (THT) to see Middlebury College Musical Theater's (MCMT) performance of the Tony Award-winning musical "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder."

The show follows the story of the Monty Navarro (Graeme Evans '28) who gradually murders the eight people that stand between him and his inheritance as a distant relative of the aristocratic D'Ysquith family. Directed by club president Jonathan Mount '25.5 and stage-managed by co-president Lucy Curtis-Cherry '26.5, the show marks the longest run time of an MCMT shows thus far, with a two hour and 25 minute duration.

The story begins with Monty writing his memoir in a jail cell, standing trial for murder. He tells the audience his backstory, tracing back all the way to his mother's funeral, where her old acquaintance Miss Shingle (Truett Ramsey '25.5) revealed that Monty's mother is a disowned member of the D'Ysquiths. This information changes his life; as Monty recollects the poverty and struggles he grew up in, he realizes he's ninth in line for an earldom in the D'Ysquith family.

Monty tells his lover Sibella (Patrice Cahill '25.5) of the news. Yet, hailing from a high-ranking family herself and hoping to marry a rich man, she is unimpressed, remarking that eight people would need to die for Monty to become earl. Filled with the desire to win Sibella's heart, rise high in the social rankings and avenge his mother, Monty plots the murder of the eight D'Ysquiths ahead of him in the lineage.

COURTESY PHOTO/ANDY GOBIN

1. Quinn Donaldson '26.5 as Hyacinth with Julia Gaudet '28, Nathan Bernazzani '27, Nicholas Christoforakis '29, Gabriela Rosen '26, and Zoe Park '27.5.
2. The full cast and crew of the show.

"I think Monty started off the show like this little kid," Evans said. "He doesn't know what's going on, he's lost, shy, polite and still charming but he's just lost his mother and is going through turmoil in his life. He doesn't want to be stuck in the same position he's always been in, yet even as he grows he never shakes off the imposter feeling he has. Each scene is mixing all these elements: he's charming, shy, insecure, and a little off his rocker."

Throughout the show, Monty uses his charm to approach and inconspicuously murder his family members. A D'Ysquith is captured by a cult overseas, another falls under ice while iceskating, a third is attacked by a swarm of bees and yet another has a fatal weightlifting "accident."

Remarkably, all of the D'Ysquiths are played by one actor, Quinn Donaldson '26.5, making the show technically difficult to put together. Donaldson was required to play eight distinct characters, some of which include an eccentric priest, a gay beekeeper and a pretentious benefactress. At times his costume changes occurred in a matter of seconds, giving him minimal time to adapt to the demands of a new role. This aspect of the play contributed to the hilarity of the viewing experience, contrasting nicely with the show's darker premise.

Monty's character also presented technical challenges. Since he is both narrating these stories and reliving them, he almost never leaves the stage.

"It is musically and technically one of the harder roles I've had to play in my life," Evans said. "[Monty] switches from writing in his memoir to interacting with the characters on stage. The audience is also a character he can interact with. The role was vocally taxing. I had a water bottle on stage and kept drinking from it to hydrate my voice – I don't know if I would've made it without that water."

Vocally, the chorus is essential to the creation of the harmonious soundscape (Truett Ramsey '25.5, Zoe Park '27.5, Julia Gauder '28, Gabriela Rosen '26, Nathan Bernazzani '27 and Nicholas Christoforakis '29). The end of both acts involved seven part harmonies created by the ten actors on stage. The pace of the show is fast-moving, with scenes abruptly changing into different landscapes.

Mount said he knew this show would be a difficult production, but chose it because he knew the talent in the club.

"I had absolute faith in the club. The actors and the technical crew are all very talented. MCMT has come a long way," Mount said.

Sibella marries another man, but her love affair with Monty continues. Meanwhile, Monty meets his cousin Phoebe (Annalise Houghton '28), who he starts to fall in love with. Monty's attitudes towards the two women are distinct. He lusts after Sibella, but she manipulatively withholds her love from him. Phoebe, on the other hand, is honest and direct with her interest in Monty. She takes him seriously and acts with emotional maturity.

"Sibella is all Monty's ever dreamed of," Evans said. "It's not in the script, but we decided they'd known each other for a while, maybe they grew up together. And then he meets Phoebe, who is super different; she doesn't play games. Suddenly Monty falls in love with Phoebe. Sibella is still his priority, but he is entertaining Phoebe. At some point it shifts and Phoebe becomes Monty's priority. Monty never got over the fact that Sibella married another man, as we can see when he says 'We should've always loved each other, that is if you loved me like I love you.'"

When Monty is arrested for suspicion of murder of the last standing D'Ysquith — ironically, the only one he didn't commit — Sibella and Phoebe work together to save him and get him out of prison. Monty is deemed innocent and saved from the death sentence, becoming earl of Highhurst and getting away with it all. Despite the moral implications of Monty's success, his victory was satisfying to watch with its witty and memorable characters, catchy songs and abnormal deaths.

This was Mount's last production with MCMT. When he first arrived at Middlebury, he was cast in "Mamma Mia", but due to problems with the copyright the show was cancelled, plummeting club engagement. In an effort to revamp the club, Mount and other members decided to put on two performances in both the fall and spring semesters, rather than a singular performance in the spring.

Despite this early head start, the team had to keep amping up rehearsal hours per week due to the technical challenges of the show. Luckily, the hard work paid off and the show was a success, with a packed theater each night.

Having made his mark on the club, Mount used the show's program to inspire the next generation of MCMT. "I can't wait to see the new heights MCMT reaches after I graduate!" he wrote.

THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE SELF: M GALLERY'S REBIRTH

By MAYA ALEXANDER
Editor at Large

After a several year hiatus, M Gallery, Middlebury's student-led gallery space, has returned. Over 100 students gathered on Nov. 14 in the Old Stone Mill for the opening of the first 2025 exhibition "Etymology of the Self."

The exhibition featured a wide range of student work, from paintings, drawings, and photography to film, pottery, and dance, celebrating multidisciplinary creativity and unique interpretations of the self and the body.

The curated environment radiated warmth, with string lights accompanying each work, interactive viewing experiences tucked in small, cozy spaces and the first public showing of the dance work "Current," which took place on the frosty grass outside dazzling the viewers with dreamy movements, white lights and a (unintentional, but apt) light drizzle of rain. Performed by Hannah Ennis '23.5 , Eloise McFarlane '24.5 and Liefe Temple '25.5, the work draws inspiration from the structures of rivers — mouths, rocks, meanders, rapids — to shape both improvisation and set choreography. The work will appear again on Dec. 4 and 5 at the Middlebury Dance Department's fall concert.

The night came together through board meetings throughout the semester, energy from the Student Activities Fair and funding from the Student Activities Office's (SAO) Explore Grant and the Innovation Hub's Treehouse Fund. Mark McGoey '26.5 and Annalise Johnson '25.5, who was a member of the previous iteration of the club, were the vital forces in reviving M Gallery.

McGoey explained the journey of bringing the club back to life and its unique role in the art community.

"Last year, I wanted to show some paintings and I was finding out that there's really no easy way to do that if you're not presenting in the thesis show or if you're not doing it for some other student organization, like MiddCat, for example," McGoey said.

To get around this obstacle, McGoey put on his own exhibition last November — but he was still determined to create larger, more official avenues for a greater number of students to share their talent together. At the time, he alluded to the possibility of the reemergence of M Gallery, which caught Johnson's attention, not knowing that students were still passionate about the club. The two of them grabbed lunch shortly after and the rest is history: by September, they had created a new board and secured a table at the SAO Club Fair, though they are not yet an official club under the SAO.

Equally passionate about the rebirth of this creative community were students who, like McGoey, were looking for outlets to showcase their work. Willa Sullivan '27, whose portrait photography highlights the body interacting with the surrounding environment, was grateful for the opportunity to share her work within a supportive community.

"Going to school in a small rural town, it can be hard to find places or events where I can appreciate student art in a way that feels structured, but most importantly celebratory. I love that M Gallery provides a space for artists to be seen by a large group of students, and I feel excited to keep creating more," she said.

Sullivan looks forward to the potential of the club.

"I think that the revival of M Gallery is going to create a very strong community here at Middlebury. Their first show in several years pulled in hundreds of students who are interested in coming together to enjoy art. I see this being a very cool space for both artists and art lovers," she said.

Given how pleased McGoey appeared to be with the exhibition, I had to ask him what was next. Though he cannot say for certain quite yet, he alluded to conversation about a pop-up exhibition during J-Term, as well as another exhibition in the spring.

He also reflected on how to improve the curation and planning aspects.

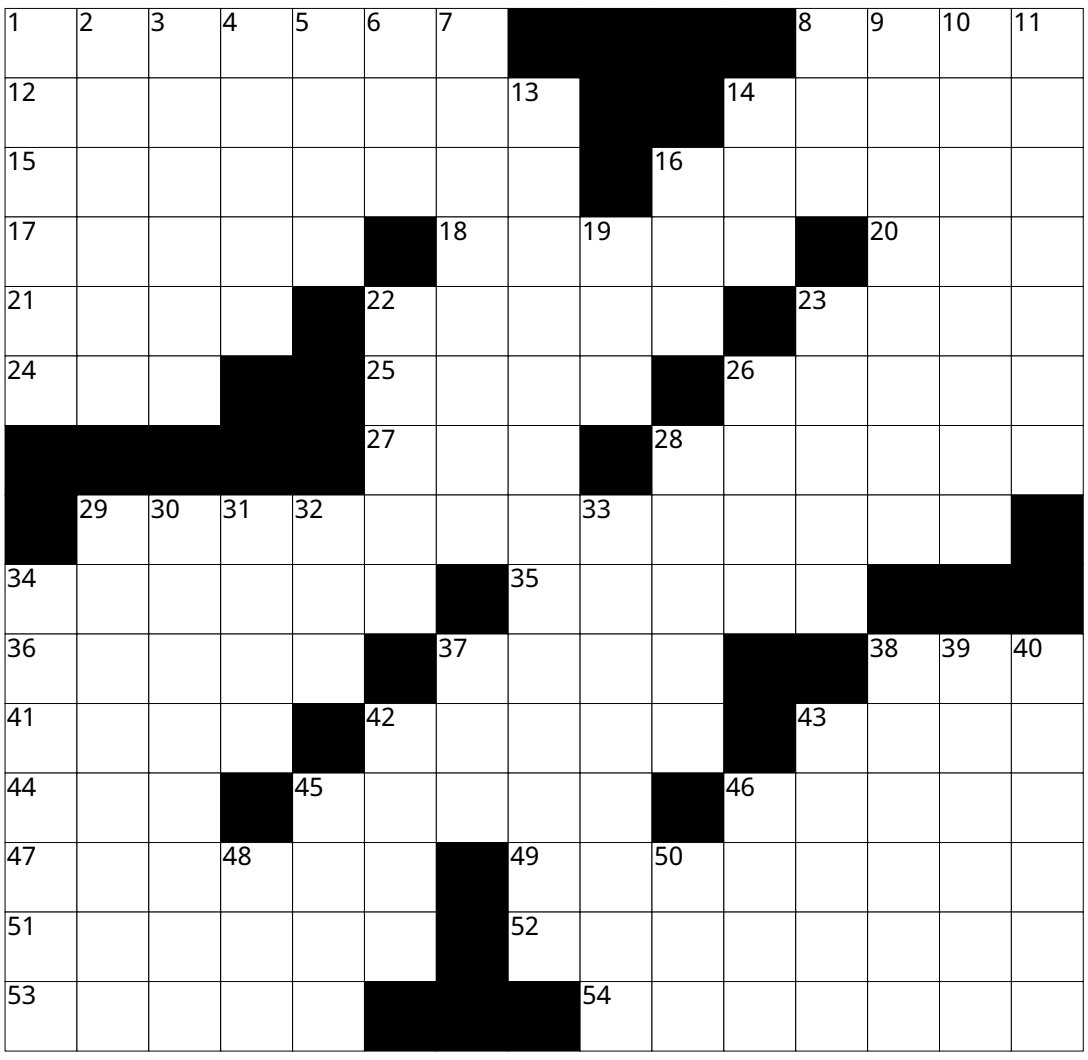
"I think by releasing the theme earlier, we give people more time to make work specifically for it. So, we were all happy with it. We thought it was a strong start. But also, we want to get more particular about it."

COLE CHAUDHARI/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Various works featured in M Gallery's fall exhibition "Etymology of Self."

In any case, the future of M Gallery seems promising. M Gallery's successful first exhibition of 2025 is a great reminder that you certainly do not need to be taking a class or be officially part of a club to showcase and enjoy art. While it may be intimidating to showcase personal work, the turnout of the event proved that there is serious interest in and support for student art; it brings together a wonderful group of people who take time to observe and dissect each piece and spark conversations with others about it.

Slippery Slope

Ella Charnizon and Avery Goldstein



ACROSS
1 *"The American Indian" writer
8 Hiker's snack
12 Reason for italics
14 Worker with a pick
15 Crown
16 "Stay!"
17 Fit for ___
18 "What goes up must come down," e.g.
20 Hawaiian Punch rival
21 Give stars to
22 Humongous
23 Pain in the neck
24 Color, as Easter eggs
25 Actress Kendrick
26 ___-Lay
27 Two below XL
28 Speaker
29 31st President
34 Orzo and ziti
35 How some issues are contested
36 Like a javelin's path
37 Soccer icon
38 Reddit Q&A
41 Confidentiality docs
42 Furnishings
43 Go postal
44 Recipe amt.
45 Equip anew
46 Clinton running mate
47 Like some collisions
49 Another word for 8 across, or what would be the result of throwing together the stared clues
51 Like Angelica, among the Schuyler sisters
52 Where one person's trash is another's treasure
53 Like non-oyster months
54 Indian spice blends

DOWN
1 Liquor store sign
2 "Don't worry about me!"
3 Soda with the slogan "Obey your thirst"
4 Gleamed
5 *"Auld ___ Syne"
6 Spanish "that"
7 Orthodontic need
8 Tonic's partner
9 Not benched, as in hockey
10 Sign up
11 *Exam monitor
13 Carrie Bradshaw column that shares its title with the series
14 May honoree
16 Green ___ Bystander Intervention program
19 Cookbook writer Garten
22 Battleship and Go, for two
23 In on, with "to"
26 Pull a fast one on
28 *Participant in democracy
29 Aggressive pitch
30 Wild adventure
31 66 and others: Abbr.
32 Villainous
33 3-D photographic image
34 *The Middlebury Mascot, for one
37 A pop
38 Twisted balloon shape, often
39 Kind of folder
40 Tippy-tops
42 Bad impression?
43 Chip dip
45 *Flag maker Betsy
46 Baby goats
48 ___ Moines, Iowa
50 Palindromic constellation

MEN'S SOCCER CAMPAIGN ENDS AGAINST #8 WHEATON

By THEODORE MANIATIS
Sports Editor

Two Sundays ago, a long, hard-fought season for men's soccer ended with a 1–0 loss to Wheaton College. A goal in the 20th minute proved enough to push the Lyons into the Sweet Sixteen of the NCAA tournament, but not without a moment of controversy and a hotly debated goal-line photo.

After a 3–0 win against SUNY Geneseo in the first round, Middlebury traveled to Massachusetts to play in front of more than 500 people in the round of 32 matchup. The Panthers started positively, but Wheaton netted the decisive goal when a corner weaved through a jumble of players to sneak in at the near post.

Minutes later, Joey Waterman '26 saved a Wheaton penalty down the middle — the first of two on the night — adding to the bittersweet ending of an incredible season for the senior goalkeeper.

The day's most intense drama unfolded from a corner kick in the 35th minute. Pablo Gonzalez '26.5 rose for a header that was seemingly blocked by the Wheaton goalie. However, Middlebury's squad insisted the ball went over the line before the keeper swiped it away. Rumors have circulated that the Wheaton photographer snapped a photo of the dramatic moment of the ball over the line — the goal that could have saved Middlebury's season. But with the evidence in the enemy's hands, the Panthers couldn't prove their case. Despite having outshot their opponent 10–5, the Lyons held on to win by the solo goal.

Head coach Alex Elias cautioned the team not to ruminate over the unfortunate moment.

"If we want to be great, we're going to have calls go against us, we're going to have bad moments go against us," Elias said. "We still have to find a way to win." For a Panthers team who has found a way to win plenty in the past two seasons, this year snapped the streak.

Since the last issue, Middlebury also fell in the semifinals of the NESCAC tournament to the #1 ranked Tufts, who went on to win the championship. After Middlebury went up 2-0 with 20 minutes left, the Jumbos scored three unanswered goals. The final was an overtime game-winner, crushing the Panthers' hearts in a game in which they were the better team.

The match ultimately came down to who took their chances; Middlebury squandered a point-blank header that should have made their lead three, rattling the crossbar instead. Overall, performing in the clutch was a season-long problem for the team according to winger Keagan Harder '28.

"In the end it's about taking moments and I think we didn't take our moments as well as we should have this year," Harder said. "And credit to our opponents. They did well in that aspect."

Elias echoed that sentiment. "We did not encounter a team that was just unbeatable and we got out-executed in some moments... I think we had the capacity to still be playing."

All season long, Middlebury's campaign walked the line between mediocre and great. In their five losses this year, they had at least as many shots as their opponent, including in their match against Wheaton and two games facing Tufts. The Panthers weren't outplayed, just out-executed in decisive moments.

For a team ranked #3 at the beginning of the season, defeat was a tough pill to swallow — and the departure of the seniors made it even harder.

"That's the worst part about losing," Elias said. "Yeah, you want championships and you feel like we had more to do on the field, but we will not get together every day again."

COURTESY PHOTO/ ANNA SAWIN
Goalkeeper Joey Waterman '26 pings the ball forward.

The graduating seniors are Alem Hadzic '26, Eduardo Casanova '26, Daniel Kaye '26, Tyler Milne '26, Gavin Randolph '26, and Joey Waterman '26.

"I will miss spending every day with this team," Elias said.

Although the makeup of the team is changing, Middlebury will remain competitive next year. First-team NESCAC forward Will Sawin '27 will return for his senior season. Harder, 2024's NESCAC freshman of the year, is going into his junior campaign. Gonzalez hopes to finagle an extra year of eligibility. And the new first year class will add fresh firepower to the team's arsenal.

"We have a lot of really talented young players," Harder explained. "And even though we didn't achieve what we wanted to achieve this season, I feel closer with this team than I ever have."

With another year gone, the clock is ticking for the Panthers to win a championship. Their last trophy was in 2010: a NESCAC title. Since then, Middlebury has been a NESCAC finalist three times and a semifinalist seven times — often close, but no cigar. With returning talent, incoming potential and a great coach, there's reason to believe Middlebury's breakthrough is close.

AMATEUR VERSUS ATHLETE: MY FIRST TIME ON A HORSE

By TING CUI
Business Director

My introduction to the horse world began with teeth marks on my hand.

When I walked into the barn at Eddy Farm on a late November evening, it smelled faintly of manure, and the floor was strewn with scraps of hay and dust from the indoor ring. In one stall stood Scout, a blind and deaf elderly horse with a glass eye who resembled a real-life Bojack Horseman. I reached out to greet a horse named Dan, who promptly bit the back of my hand. This was the world I'd signed up to explore with the Middlebury Equestrian team.

The Middlebury Equestrian team practices weekly at Eddy Farm School under Head Coach Kate Selby, who founded the club in 1994, and Assistant Coach and barn manager Margaret Bojanowski. Eddy Farm is a nonprofit organization that provides boarding for community members who aren't able to keep horses on their own properties. They currently have 36 horses on-site. Middlebury riders must attend at least one required practice a week at the Eddy Farm to compete. However, students and community members of all ages and experience levels can take lessons at the farm. That's exactly what I set out to do.

I began my evening at the farm by observing a team practice. Co-captains Tess Hegarty '25.5 and Kathleen Schroeder '27, along with newer rider Gavi Gilbert-Trachtman '28.5, were riding Dan, Grace and Joe. The riders seamlessly moved through warm-up laps before progressing to posting drills at various beats of the horses' trots. Then came navigating the courses Coach Margaret set up, and taking jumps one at a time. Coach Margaret called corrections mid-stride — "Toes up! Stretch up tall! Eyes ahead!" The riders cheered each other on, while steam rose from the horses' backs, their coats damp with sweat despite the freezing air.

Rider-horse communication is constant and precise. There's no faking a partnership with a roughly 1,200-pound animal. To be successful, one must communicate clearly, stay present in one's body, and move with the rhythm of the horse.

I tried to keep all of this in mind before it was my turn to ride.

My mount was Joseph, known as "Joe" to his friends, a cream-colored horse with warm brown spots and hazel eyes. Getting onto Joe was perhaps the most ungraceful I have ever looked in my life. Once mounted, the first thing I noticed was the height. As someone who figure skates and knows how to fall properly, the fear of falling off a horse was still intense. Unlike skating, where I can control my edges, riding felt like surfing a restless wave beyond my control. Joe's movements shifted me side to side, up and down – the motion intensifying dramatically as he broke into a trot.

Hegarty remarked that the contour of Joe's back is particularly flat and comfortable to sit on — a memo I didn't quite get as I bounced around on top of him. Despite his calm demeanor and reputation as an excellent lesson horse for beginners, Joe refused to move forward for me. Assistant Coach Margaret assured me that Joe actually enjoyed his work, often returning to his stall happier after being ridden. He just needed some initial convincing.

Once he began to walk, the corrections arrived rapid-fire from Coach Margaret: "Toes up! Hands up and floating! Legs locked! Eyes ahead! Don't forget to breathe!" That last one in particular felt like she was reading my mind. I was using muscles I didn't know existed — my adductors hugging Joe's sides, sitbones engaged, my core and back working to maintain posture. The counterintuitive lesson: being stiff makes you more likely to fall. You need to be strong and relaxed simultaneously, moving with the horse rather than against it.

What looked effortless when the team rode was anything but. Steering Joe wasn't as simple as driving a car. Turning right meant pressing my inner left leg into his ribs while turning my head in that direction, keeping my torso square. To halt, I learned to apply gentle leg pressure, sit deeper in the saddle, and pull the reins back a few inches toward my waist, using my entire body to signal the command.

The Middlebury team competes through the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association (IHSA) in the hunter seat equitation style, an English discipline where judges evaluate the rider's form and communication with the horse. According to IHSA rules, riders never compete on their own horses. Instead, they're assigned unfamiliar mounts at each show through a random draw, eliminating the expense of horse ownership and leveling the playing field.

Even with this format, equipment costs remain significant. Saddles cost upwards of $2,000, bridles around $200-300, and quality boots running $200-$300. The team's scholarship program supports students who couldn't otherwise afford the equipment, while the club offers inventory loans, group trips to consignment tack stores, and subsidizes all club and team rider lesson fees. All show fees (entry, coaching, transportation) are also covered by the club budget.

This creates an opportunity for riders to thrive. This season was particularly strong for Middlebury's 18 riders, who compete in Zone 1, Region 2.

"Our last show was my personal favorite because it was my last show with Midd Eq," Hegarty said. "We came away with three first places, two seconds, and some overall awesome results. That made me super proud and excited for the future of the team. This is sort of the end of my competitive career, so it was super fun to come away from that last show winning high point."

By the end of my 10-minute test ride, Joe finally started listening. Nuzzling his head after was both validating and sweet. We had formed a connection. Despite the freezing temperatures, the initial bite from Dan, and my thoroughly cumbersome mount and dismount, I understood what draws these athletes to the barn every week and what keeps them coming back to work with these powerful and kind animals.

My first time on a horse was daunting, ungraceful, and cold. And I'd absolutely do it again.

COURTESY PHOTO / TING CUI
Ting Cui '25.5 learning to ride the horse Joe.

AUDREY MACLEAN '27 WINS NCAA DIII CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

In approximately 50 seconds, you could circle E Lot and find that no parking spots remain, or watch your bagel burn as you send it through the Proc toaster a second time when you knew you shouldn't have, or ride the Ross elevator in claustrophobic and quiet silence from the first to sixth floor.

Approximately 50 seconds was also the gap between Audrey MacLean '27 and the second place finisher at the NCAA DIII Cross Country Championships on Saturday, Nov. 22. With her dominant victory, MacLean became only the second runner in program history to claim the individual NCAA title, the first coming over 39 years ago. MacLean is also now Middlebury's fourth three-time All-American, and on Tuesday this week, was crowned the USTFCCCA NCAA DIII National Women's Cross Country Athlete of the Year.

During the nationals race on Saturday, many runners hammered the typical, ambitious first splits of a cross country championship. MacLean sat in second by three seconds after the first kilometer, surrounded by multiple MIT runners and this year's other top DIII competitors. However, the race was always going to become a question of Middlebury's MacLean or RPI's Jules Bleskoski '27. As the first- and second-ranked runners respectively, it was only a matter of kilometers before the two separated from the pack and fought for the title head-to-head.

There was not much of a fight. MacLean had already faced Bleskoski in the regional championship meet the week prior, running a tactical race and comfortably surging past the RPI front-runner in the final 400 meters. At the national championship, with a more complete read on her opponent, MacLean was able to confidently take and retain the lead.

In the second kilometer, Bleskoski sat right behind MacLean as they began to drop the rest of the field. Then, after a brutally quick third kilometer, MacLean separated herself at the front by over 10 seconds. The gap only widened throughout the rest of the race, growing to 48.2 seconds at the finish. By the time the fifth place runner crossed the line, MacLean had already finished over one minute prior.

MacLean ran a personal best with a final time of 20:16.8. The result is also the sixth-fastest NCAA DIII national championship 6k time in history. In addition to her regional and national titles, MacLean won the NESCAC title for a second consecutive time and claimed first at the Connecticut College and Hoffmann invitational meets in her historic season with the Panthers.

MIDDLEBURY FIELD HOCKEY CONCLUDES COMPETITIVE SEASON

By HANNA FREUND
Staff Writer

COURTESY PHOTO/ MARTY CORCORAN

Megan Fuqua '27 winds up for a shot against Endicott.

Middlebury College Field Hockey faced off at home against Westfield State University on Nov. 12, marking its 25th NCAA tournament appearance — under the lights, on a cold Wednesday night.

Prior to the contest, Westfield State boasted a 18-4 record on their season.

Middlebury got on the board within the first minute of the game when midfielder Megan Fuqua '27 scored off of a penalty stroke. In the second quarter, Fuqua scored on yet another stroke.

Claire McMichael '27 tallied the Panthers' third goal in the second half. Soon after, Addie Chandler '29 sent a quick-moving pass down the field for Fuqua, who expertly recovered the ball on the back side of her stick, spun around, and sent a reverse chip soaring into the top left corner of the goal.

The Panthers continued to dominate over the Owls. Fuqua tallied her fourth goal of the game, assisted by Captain Grace Keefe '26. The sixth and final goal of the game for Middlebury came from Chandler, tallying her eighth on the season.

The victory marked Head Coach Katherine DeLorenzo's 500th career win, a milestone achieved by only 14 other field hockey coaches across the history of all three NCAA divisions.

Following their triumph over Westfield State, the Panthers faced Endicott College on Nov. 15 at Johns Hopkins University. Earlier in the season, Middlebury fell to Endicott 1-2 in an overtime upset.

"Going into the Endicott game, everyone was just excited at the opportunity to play them again," Chandler told The Campus. "Second chances are rare in sports, and we came in with a chip on our shoulder, using our previous loss as fuel."

The Panthers entered halftime following two early, first quarter goals from Endicott.

However, Middlebury responded in the third quarter with a shot by McMichael that brought the score to 1-2. Not long after, Fuqua executed a perfect penalty stroke, tying the game and sending the Panthers and the Gulls into overtime. This marked Fuqua's 14th goal this season, the highest total on the team.

During the second overtime period, McMichael delivered again by sending a soaring backhanded shot past the Endicott goalie and into the back of the net.

"We went down early but we [collected] ourselves, played together, chipped away, and were able to force overtime," Keefe told the Campus. "I think that game was representative of our efforts all season long, we never counted ourselves out of any game, we played with and for each other and played our hearts out."

The ninth-ranked Middlebury team beat #8 Endicott in yet another overtime thriller. Middlebury has set a program high of playing 10 overtime games this season, with four of these going into shootouts.

"Those are the kind of games you remember, not necessarily because of the happy ending, but because of our resilience and relentlessness throughout," Chandler wrote to The Campus.

The next day, Middlebury faced Johns Hopkins University in the Elite 8. The two teams faced each other last in the NCAA Division III Field Hockey Regional Final last year, with Middlebury beating Johns Hopkins 3–1 along their championship-winning run. The Panthers also defeated the Blue Jays in the championship game in 2021, 2022, and 2023, but were bested this year in the budding rivalry.

"Hopkins had a really great team this season and they were fierce competitors for the full 60 minutes," Fuqua said. "They had a game plan, and they executed. It was exciting to play in such a competitive game in the Elite 8 round of the tournament, and we can only expect that teams will get better with each season."

Middlebury bowed out to Johns Hopkins 0–3. Hopkins advanced to the championship game, ultimately losing to Tufts.

"I am proud of the way we gave it our all and left everything on the field, and that game definitely gave me a lot of motivation [for] next season," Fuqua said.

For the first time since 2016, Middlebury field hockey did not lift the national title, breaking their historic seven-year streak. While this is not the result the players had hoped for, they refuse to be discouraged.

"Middlebury College field hockey showed me that success comes from hard work, but it can and should be joyful," Keefe told The Campus.

For the rest of the team, this season must motivate towards the future, providing the squad with valuable lessons in perseverance.

"We grew so much as a group this season, and I am so excited to come out firing next year. We know where our gaps are and what things we need to work on in the off season, and we have a really exciting group of players returning for the 2026 season," Fuqua said.

Despite failing to repeat as national champions, the season was far from a wash.

"My biggest takeaway from this season is the amount of resilience and determination on this team," defender Ally Kennedy '27 said. "In every game this season, not just the 10 games that went into overtime, every single person on this team was determined to contribute everything they possibly could."

BALANCING THE SABBATH AND SPORT

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

In the middle of the night, Nathan Szubin '29 woke up and brought the couch cushions to the kitchen. He arranged the cushions lengthwise on the floor, repositioned his inflatable pillow and slipped back into his sleeping bag as he drifted off again. It was the night before the regional championship race, and as the St. Lawrence University soccer team partied next door, Szubin had to improvise his own quiet.

Improvisation, compromise and finding balance have long shaped Szubin's life. Szubin practices traditional egalitarian Judaism, differing in philosophy but similar in observance to Orthodox Judaism. A core part of his faith thus involves observing the Sabbath: no driving cars, using phones, or even turning on lights, among other rules, from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.

At home, the Sabbath is typically spent having family dinners, attending synagogue and relaxing with a book or friends. But since joining the Middlebury cross country team, the Sabbath has looked different for Szubin. He books the closest hotels to each meet weeks in advance, drives down alone during the daytime on Friday and buys his own groceries for each pre-race dinner. He has kept the observance alive, but it has been far from ideal.

"Sitting in a hotel room by myself or sitting around a meet is not my favorite way of spending the Sabbath," Szubin admitted. "It's not really how I was raised." Race days themselves require their own set of accommodations.

On race day, Szubin wakes up without an alarm, although sometimes his Middlebury teammates assist.

"I usually just leave a window open and hope that I get up on time... God usually comes through," Szubin said.

After a breakfast of bagels, peanut butter and bananas, he either bikes or walks to the meet. At the regional championship, the best option was to stay in St. Lawrence University Cross Country's townhouse. Szubin got a morning course preview on his walk to the Middlebury team camp.

Despite the logistical hurdles, Szubin's faith has proved advantageous in numerous aspects of running. One distinct benefit is the spiritual "lock-in" inherent to the Sabbath.

"The spirit of Friday night from a religious standpoint and Friday night as the night before a race tend to actually overlap a fair amount. There's the idea of religiously disconnecting, getting focused on the spirit of the day, turning off your distractions... you let yourself relax and unwind from the tensions, and I think that's a very helpful way of going into a race as well."

Distancing himself from technology and outside distractions is not only meditative, but has also developed a unique extent of bodily awareness as a runner. On any given Saturday in season, if the team is not racing, they are likely working out. From sustained tempo efforts on Creek Rd. to hill repeats up Chipman, precise timing is key for effective training. However, Szubin cannot use a watch — his own intuition must dictate the tempo.

"I can't go off the pace, so I just go off feel. And I can tell if this feels too fast or too slow, or is this a 5:35 or 5:30 [mile] pace," Szubin explained.

Szubin's religious practice has also served a constructive role in racing. Rather than viewing his compromise between running and religion as an obstacle, Szubin finds motivation in the resulting challenges.

"When I stand on the line with everyone else, I know that I'm probably the only one that had to book a hotel five weeks in advance, or bike over there, or stop at Stop & Shop to get my dinner... I do feel a sense that I've had to just take an extra step just to be on the line. That gives me more gratitude but also lights a little bit of a fire."

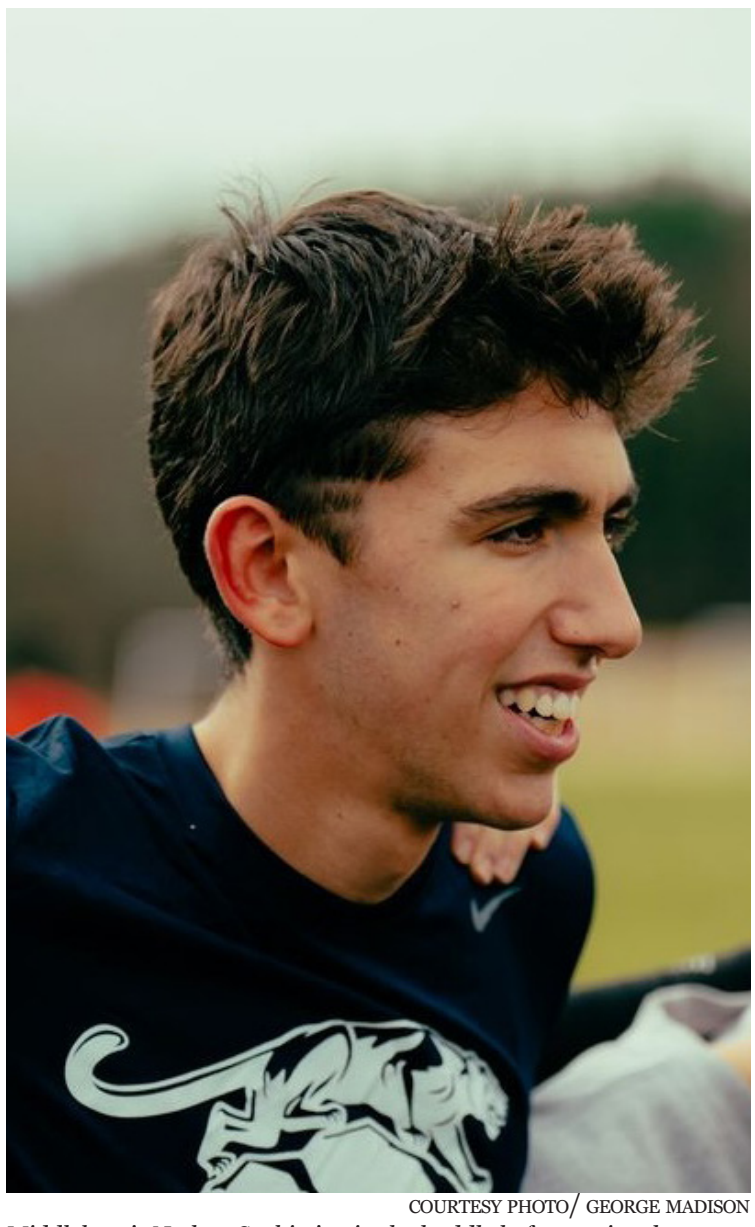
Accommodating the Sabbath has required an unwavering willingness and flexibility, not only from Szubin, but also from head coach Nicole Wilkerson. In fact, if there was one particular factor that led Szubin to pick Middlebury, it was coach Wilkerson's immediate acceptance and enthusiasm about jumping through the many hoops posed by the Sabbath.

"When I brought it up to her, she'd already thought seven steps ahead of where I was thinking and was talking about biking to meets in Boston for indoor track when it was icy on the ground," Szubin recounted.

Regardless, Szubin acknowledges that the balancing act will rarely be perfect. It was tested at the Paul Short invitational earlier in the season. Taking place the morning after the Yom Kippur fast, Szubin's pre-race routine was significantly thrown off. His finish was satisfactory given the circumstances, but it was clear that Szubin had more in the tank. Between the holiest day of the year and an early-season invitational, one had to give.

Over two months and several crucial races have passed since then.

On the Saturday morning after sleeping on the kitchen floor, Szubin ran a gritty regionals race to cement his spot on Middlebury's nine-man NCAA nationals roster. To cap off his season, Szubin finished as Middlebury's sixth runner at the national championship race in South Carolina — an impressive feat for any runner, let alone a first year who has jumped through as many hoops as he has just to race. In only his first fall as a Panther, Szubin has shown his family, team and community a glimpse of what's possible in balancing the Sabbath and sport.



COURTESY PHOTO/ GEORGE MADISON

Middlebury's Nathan Szubin '29 in the huddle before regionals